

THOUGHTS
ON
DIVINE TRUTH,

IN
A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

By SAMUEL ROWLES.

O Lord, lead me in *thy Truth*, and teach me.
DAVID.

When ~~HE~~ the Spirit of *Truth* is come, ~~HE~~ will
guide you into all Truth.

JESUS CHRIST.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR S. BAGSTER, STRAND.

Sold also by W. BURTON, Paternoster-Row; and by J. MARTIN, Junr

No. 27, Great Ruffel-Street, Bloomsbury.

And by N. BIGGS, Bristol.

1797.



PREFACE.

THE Author having laid aside *some* of his pulpit exercises by medical advice, and having a desire to supply that defect, gave the *first* occasion to this publication. In the beginning of correspondence with his friend, the plan was laid on a much larger scale ; but on further consideration, a compendium was judged most likely to be acceptable. When the present letters were begun, there was no intention to mention any author's performance, as the writer had then no knowledge of any book or pamphlet, on either part of the subject, but what had received some reply. However, while they were in hand, he had an opportunity of reading Mr. Clarke, Dr. Toulmin, and Mr. Taylor ; and thought it right to take some notice of them. See Letter VI. and VII.

Though *several* characters are professedly introduced, yet the author would wish it to be observed, that the *whole* of what is written is recommended to the serious attention of *each* character, in order to form a judgment of the subject considered. *Divine Truth*, like an elegant and finished building, may be contemplated in its parts distinctly ; yet, though they may be distinguished in contemplation, in fact they should not be separated ; because, however they may strike us when singly viewed, it is only as related to the whole, and as united, that

we arrive at a suitable conception of the beauty of the building, and of the builder's design. If, indeed, the object of pursuit be only our own gratification, and not a desire of knowing the end of the great Architect, our time is mispent, and our labor without honor.

If we would entertain just and suitable thoughts of God, both in himself, and in his relation to us, we should always recollect that there must be a *strait path of truth*, from the first discovery of himself to man, unto the consummation of his wonderful design. This thought must be granted, one would suppose, by every man; because the Most High cannot but will to display his glory in all his proceedings: and consequently, all he says, and does, must be in righteousness and truth. And where, but in the written word, can we expect to find this path of truth described? There it is visible; and no where else but there.

But this path is intersected with so many devious tracts, through the devices of men, that a person cannot walk far without seeing some going astray. And who, that loves his neighbour, can forbear giving him a caution of his danger, or attempting to set him right? Though the friendly action is often misunderstood and misrepresented. Now, it arises from a spirit of singularity! then of bigotry! By one, it is mere opposition! by another, it is turning the world upside down! and a third, has no scruple to call it fitting in judgment on men's eternal state. But the diversity of opinion gives a presumption that the whole is groundless; and therefore affords no reason why the *Truth* should not be pursued with a strong and steady step, knowing that the end of truth is peace.

One can scarcely bestow a thought on such a subject, because he has no inclination to puzzle his head with a heap of "intelligible notions." Another has hardly patience to peruse it, because it is not a defence of his favorite hypothesis. And a third wants something that is more practical: he has no time to read controversy. If gracious experience and practice are

to be regulated by the word and spirit of truth, then our knowledge of *Divine Truth* must be important, and it cannot be too freely or too fully opened to us. And therefore the only question is this—*Is it divine truth?* If *not*, let it fall for ever. If it *be*, it demands and deserves attention. The man, therefore, who condescends to read, is earnestly requested to examine the subject closely and impartially by the unerring word; (Isaiah viii. 20.) not that self may be gratified, but that God may be glorified. The writer makes no pretence to infallibility; but he has a cordial desire that the truth should prevail. If a departure from it should be perceived by the reader, a *friendly* attempt to correct the error will be acknowledged; and, if he find any spiritual profit in the perusal, let him give God the glory, and not forget to pray for his affectionate friend,

The AUTHOR.

1900

THOUGHTS, &c.

LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

YOU are apprized of the depraved, dissipated taste of the human mind : passing shadows engross the attention ; while scarcely a thought is employed on eternal realities. Were we to dwell for ever here, and were we independent of the God of heaven, some apology might possibly be formed for such conduct ; but, as the reverse of both is the fact, to give it a proper name would perhaps be deemed invidious. To a certain class of persons, few things are so unacceptable as *Truth* ; especially as *religious* truth. And yet there is such a thing in the world ; for all take it for granted that they are possessed of it. Every man gives himself credit for being *right* in religion. But, can *Divine Truth* be so very multifarious as human opinions ? If so, there can be no criterion by which to distinguish *truth* from *error* ; for human opinions are not only diverse but contradictory ; whereas *divine truth* is uniform in its nature, and harmonious in all its parts. It must be necessarily consistent with itself, in every view, because it originates with the *God of Truth*. All truth indeed is derived from him ; but, if we may distinguish, more especially *religious* truth : because every thing that deserves the name of religion *must* correspond with his nature and perfections, and be directed to his glory ; or we only prostitute the venerable

name *religion* by a misapplication of it. We shall ultimately profit nothing by misnaming things; nay, we deceive ourselves; and a final deception is awful and irremediable.

Were all men under the bias of *truth* in their religious opinions, who may *sincerely* think they are, how could there be *error*? 'Tis true, candor seems to be much esteemed by some as their guide and patron; for, though they do not embrace their neighbour's creed, because they think it wrong, yet hoping well of his *sincerity*, they refer him to a merciful God, and conclude on his happiness at last. *So they wrap it up.* And I confess that *truth* will bear with the weak in faith, and hope the best of their efforts to promote its cause; but it knows no salvo for error, and has no dependence on human integrity. *Divine Truth* is a Sovereign that admits of no competitor, much less a rival: for the God of truth hath said, *My glory will I not give to another.* The sovereignty of *truth* is such, that it possesses, in itself, a sufficiency for wielding its own sceptre, for supporting its own authority, for protecting and rewarding all its subjects. Here, then, human candor is a thing of nought. We are *of the truth*, or we are not. If we *are*, we need no man's candor to further or secure our felicity. If we are *not*, it cannot profit us; for GOD IS JUDGE HIMSELF. His *judgment is according to truth*: and, by his judgment, we stand or fall for ever. He is the *only* judge of that worship which corresponds with his nature and perfections. None else has he given to man. None else will be accepted of him. None else has its seat and origin in *divine truth*. All besides will be treated as an impeachment of his wisdom and knowledge; as an insult on the purity of his nature, and the rights of his dominion. When the great eternal God shall arise to ask, *Who has required this at your hand?* what argument will be heard? what plea will prevail? *Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.* Ps. l. 21.

From hence it appears that the *knowledge* and *reception* of *religious truth*, must be of the most interesting importance to

us, when we stand before God. And it may be safely concluded, that no man, whose mind is duly impressed with the certainty of appearing before his glorious throne, can treat this *knowledge* as a matter of indifference. Seeing his eternal ALL involved in the event of that day, his earnest enquiry will be, "*What is Divine Truth?*" Heaving with deep concern, and big with longing expectation, his anxious bosom looks for an answer of peace: and, following the discoveries the Lord has made of himself, an answer of peace shall he receive. "*I will give them an heart to know me.*" The importance of a deep and intimate knowledge of "*divine truth*" will be confessed by every gracious man; but whence can such knowledge come, except the holy Spirit of Truth, by his own effectual teaching, impart the blessing? The word may be read and heard, but without his illuminating power, it will never be spiritually understood. On such a subject, therefore, his gracious operations should always be exalted to his honor; because the knowledge of *divine truth*, simply as a "*science*," is not an earnest of eternal glory.

There are but *two* ways by which the Lord has made himself known to man; namely, the *Law*, and the *Gospel*. By the *former* we know and worship him *only* as the author and object of NATURAL RELIGION; but by the *latter*, as the end and glory of REVEALED RELIGION also. In *that* he is the God of *nature*; in *this*, the God of all *grace*. In each there is *divine truth*. Truth worthy of him; acceptable to him; and suited to us, both as creatures and as sinners. I say, as *creatures* and as *sinners*, because neither the *Law* in itself, nor the *Gospel* in itself, can give us the knowledge of God in both relations. We should therefore never blend them together, or put one in the place of the other; because they were never used to administer the same instruction to man. Since the fall of man, we have no knowledge of God that can ascertain our real happiness, but in the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ; seeing his capacity for the exercise of

natural religion is irrecoverably gone for ever. For this reason it is safe to assert, that, if a man does not *know* and *worship* God according to the doctrine and design of *revealed religion*, he is an utter stranger to all that deserves the name of *religious* knowledge and worship; whatever ideas he may entertain of himself, or however he may stand in the esteem of others. Had *natural religion* been perpetuated, that of *revealed*, had never been known; seeing no end could have been answered by its discovery: for, they are so evidently distinct, that, to call them both one, is, virtually, to deny the existence of both. In order to shew you the *truth* of this assertion, it may suffice for the present to say, that one flows *necessarily* from the creation of man; but the other *freely* from the sovereign pleasure of God. Man, as formed by his Maker, **COULD NOT** be without law to God; that is, he *must* be a subject of *natural religion* in his original state—this is *indispensible* for him as a *creature*. But, his salvation as a *sinner*, is altogether a matter of *favor* and of *goodwill*.

In my subsequent Thoughts, I may sometimes say, *moral law—law of nature—natural religion—religion of nature*, or *covenant of works*. But, however diversified the expression, my meaning will be one, unless some hint, or the connection of the place, should indicate the contrary. So, on the other side, whether I use the term *gospel* or *grace—revealed religion* or *covenant of grace*, I wish to be understood as intending the same sense. I shall not aim so much at being *large* as *profitable*; and, if what may be said should prove the means of your seeing *divine truth* more clearly in each part of the subject to edification, then, however *concise*, I shall be *large enough*.

I am, &c.

 LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,

BY the *religion of nature*, I mean neither more nor less than what was given to the first man in his state of innocence, both for himself and for his posterity; and to the exercise of which he was suited as he came from his Maker's hand. Hence I call it *natural religion*. The whole of human nature was in our great Progenitor; and, being formed in the image of God, he possessed ability for the worship enjoined him. I consider the parent and all his descendants, in my present view, as *one grand moral whole*; and the *truth* of my thought is confirmed by the united suffrage of scripture and of fact. A fact as perfectly unaccountable, if this be *not truth*, as the constant shining of the sun without an adequate cause. I mean the universality of death as the effect of sin. To deny the truth of this thought, is to exclude the government of God from the world; and, of course, to leave one of the most important events in human existence without a reason for its occurrence. But this passing.

In prosecuting this subject, we shall begin with the *nature* of the religion of our first Father. And here we should remember—*First*, That natural religion is *founded* in the necessary and indissoluble *relation* subsisting between Man and his Maker. It was adapted to his state as a creature of God, and can be considered *only* in this light with propriety.—*Secondly*, That the *object* of it is the great God, as the *author* of his being, his generous *benefactor*, his rightful *legislator*, his equitable *judge*, and his supreme *good*.—*Thirdly*, That the *rule* of his religion is given us by an unerring Teacher; “Thou shalt *love* the

"Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and
 "with *all* thy mind : and, Thou shalt *love* thy Neighbour as
 "thyself."—*Fourthly*, That the *end* of all must be the *glory* of
 God. Nor can any possible change occur to man, which can
 supersede the obligations of this religion, unless he become
 himself an independant being, or the Creator relinquish his
 claim, or become unworthy of the worship he enjoined. I
 suppose the *truth* of this remark to be obvious to you at sight,
 and therefore shall not enlarge. Having just named the na-
 ture or constitution of natural religion, as including its *ground*,
object, *rule*, and *end*, let us now consider

Its *extent*. This may comprize its happiness and its duties.
 Of its *happiness* we can form no conception by experience.
 Though it was of short duration it was not small. Though it
 was not permanent, yet it was perfect. Where there is no
 communion with God, there can be no enjoyment of him.
 Where there is no knowledge of God, there can be no com-
 munion with him. And there can be no other or further
 knowledge of him, than he is pleased to communicate. There
 can be no *happiness* in God, therefore, any otherwise than as
 he is *known*. As the object of religious worship, it is necessary
 to conclude, that the great God made himself known to man
 in the different relations given in No. 2, and that, as such,
 he had fellowship and communion with him. Here was no
 defect in the divine discovery, or man's *happiness*. The
 Most High could not, for his own honor, form a creature,
 said to be made in his image and likeness, that was incapable
 of knowing, enjoying and glorifying him : nor would he, for
 the same reason, withhold from man such discoveries of him-
 self as were congruous to the state and the relation in which he
 stood. (See No. 1.) And it is reasonable to believe, that man
 beheld the glories of his Maker, to the joy and satisfaction of
 all the powers of his soul. Beholding the manifestation of
 the divine perfections in himself, and the works of creation
 around him, he could not but love the God that made him ;
 humbly bow in his presence, as the sole object of his adoration ;
 and affectionately delight in him as the centre and fulness of

all his felicity. Nor would I forget to say, that he saw and approved the right of his Maker to govern him, and the justice of the penalty annexed to disobedience. He saw the whole—he rejoiced in all—he was *happy* in the God of his *nature*.

The *duties* of natural religion were few and plain; namely, to *receive*, with cordial affection, all his Maker might reveal to him; and to *submit*, with cheerful subjection, to all enjoined upon him. The whole spirit of that constitution seems to be expressed in these words—“*Obey my voice.*” This I consider as prior, in order of nature, to any word or action commanded or forbidden by which that obedience was to be exemplified: the *rule* is this—“*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy Neighbour as thyself.*” This is the summary of the religion of nature, and to be expressed as the Lord directs. (A) And where this is, there will be not only a perfect conformity in holy obedience to the divine will, but all will be done to the *glory* of God. (See No. 3 & 4.) The exaltation of the divine name, will be the *end* and scope of the man, in all his works and ways. The whole of human nature subsisting by federal union, in our great ancestor, this is the religion, and these the duties, of all the branches as well as the root. No more can be required of the one than of the other. However the Lord may have expressed his will of command to man, *the law of his nature* remains the same. If it requires more or less of me than of Adam, it must be changed from its original institution; and, if it has passed a change, it must be either for the better or the worse; the supposal of either of which, is too glaring an impeachment of the divine character, for any man that fears God to entertain. Special faith in Christ, or faith in Christ to salvation, can be no more a *duty* of natural religion to me, than to my innocent father, except the said change exists; but such a change cannot exist consistent with the Glory of God; and, therefore, I conclude, that special faith in Christ cannot be a *duty* of natural religion. According to my apprehension, the *whole* obligation of that constitution belongs to the man simply and only

as *a creature* of God, without any foreign or secondary consideration whatsoever, because it is the religion of his *nature*; whereas special faith in Christ necessarily views the man, in a *different state*, and God the object of his worship, in a *different relation*. The man a *finer*, and Jehovah the God of grace and *salvation*. To make this faith a *duty* of the religion of nature, is to confound two constitutions or covenants which infinite wisdom has made distinct—distinct in their *objects* and *ends* of existence; and therefore cannot be supported by *divine truth*. Mr. Brine, in his Sermon on *Holiness*, when speaking of the principle of innocence, and the principle of grace, says, “The *former* was not a life upon God, considered “in a Mediator, nor was it, in its nature, disposed and fitted “to such a kind of life; but the *latter* is such a life, agreeable “to the nature of that new covenant relation, in which the “saints stand to God.” p. 12, 13. Adam might have communion with the divine Persons in Deity as the God of *Nature*; but a state of innocence knew him not as the God of *Grace*.

And yet the *law of nature* does not leave the man to whom the Gospel comes, at liberty to treat God's record of his Son with *indifference*, much less with *disbelief* and *opposition*. No, my Friend; it requires a cordial reception of every revelation his Maker gives, because it is given *by* him who is perfect excellence and truth, and given *to* him who ought, as *a creature of God*, always to magnify his name for every display of his wisdom and pleasure. Supreme love to God, joyful subjection to his will, admiration and praise for every discovery of his counsel, we see expressed in holy *Angels*. If they are confirmed *by* Christ, they are not interested *in* him, as believers are. Their's is the religion of nature. Their additional happiness, by the salvation of Christ, arises entirely from the divine glory manifested in it. The religion of nature I consider as *radically* the same, whether given to *Angels* or to *Men*; and, were men still the subjects of it as *Angels* are, there is no doubt with me but the revelation of Christ would

be treated the same by both. Supreme love to God, which the law of nature enjoins, could do no less. This treatment of the gospel, this glorifying God for the discovery of his good pleasure in his Son, appears to me to be incumbent on every man to whom *the word of this salvation is sent*; because hereby we express both that love to God and delight in his glory, without which even the religion of nature would be an empty sound. But beyond this, it cannot go, without losing the *name* and the *design* of natural religion; for special faith in Christ beholds the Most High revealing himself to us on a different *ground*, in a different *relation*, and to a different *end*. Dr. Goodwin says, "The whole written word derived to us, and then delivered, hath such peculiar characters of divine authority engraven upon it, so as, even to natural light (if we had it pure as Adam had) would evidence itself to be of God; and so bind all men to believe it. And therefore, men are both justly commanded to believe it, and justly blamed for not believing it."*

The *duration* of natural religion, and the *penalty* annexed to a departure from it, must not be omitted. Its *duration* seems to have been short indeed! Man *was* in honor, but he *fell* from his excellence. The light of the human understanding, the rectitude of his will, and the holiness of his affections, were completely suited to the state and relation in which he was placed, both towards God and his own posterity. In a full and proper sense of the expression, he was *made upright*. And, while these moral powers continued in regular exercise, *his wisdom remained with him*, and the God of his *nature* was the joy of his soul. He possessed this happiness, and exercised these powers, as the representative of all his seed, as well as for himself. In this federal view the promise of life, subjoined to obedience performed, is always to be considered; because

* See his Works. Vol. II. On the Creatures, p. 52.

it must be taken, in its *nature, object and end*, according to the character man sustained with his Maker when the promise was made. The happiness implied in this promise could not be the same which believers enjoy in Christ Jesus, because the salvation of Christ, in all its parts and benefits, was unknown to the religion of nature. Hence it follows that, if man had continued in perfect obedience, yet the happiness he possessed could not have been derived from a higher relation to God than that in which he was formed. He might have had the life of holy Angels, but not of redeemed sinners.

“ Never did Angels taste above,
Redeeming Grace and dying Love.”

This gives a reason why special faith in Christ cannot belong to the religion of nature; because it comes from another covenant, and flows from God in another relation. The happiness of Adam was suspended on his own obedience—the happy life of a believer, of which special faith is a part, is the gift of sovereign grace, and secured in Christ Jesus. The *former* Adam lost—the *latter* he had not known. One word on the *Penalty* annexed to disobedience. Had not the moral powers of man been equal to the obligations upon him, his fall had not been the effect of choice; and his punishment, whether more or less, had been unjust. *But the Judge of all the earth will do right.* He is *the just Lord, and will not do iniquity.* God is *not unrighteous in taking vengeance.* Do we want to know the import of the threatened *penalty*? Read the history of desolating *Providence*—read the human *Bosom*—read the misery of *Hell*—read the *Cross of Christ*—and, unless we choose to be ignorant, we shall surely understand. Had the Lawgiver inflicted *more* he had been unjust to *man*; had he inflicted *less*, he had been unjust to *himself*: but, *there is no unrighteousness with God.*

The first sin of man was *Unbelief*. “Yea, hath God said?” Such was the temptation. And, though it was confessed that

God had forbidden the fruit of that tree, yet the temptation was embraced, and the authority of God despised. Here you see, my Friend, that *unbelief* is not merely thinking lightly of God, but an active opposition to his word; and treats his *command* as if it were exercising an unrighteous domination, and his *truth* as though it were a lie. Such was the *conduct* of Adam; and all his descendants have followed his steps. We are all naturally *unbelievers*, without the exception of a single instance. Such was the *nature* of *unbelief* in its original source, and such it is in all the streams. As *unbelief* was the first transgression of the law of nature, so it is the parent of all the evil in the world. Children of *disobedience* and *unbelievers* is the promiscuous or synonymous description of the same character. What can be a bolder crime than refusing subjection to the equitable *authority* of God, and setting up the human will in opposition to it? than treating the glorious *truth* of God in his gospel as foolishness; and exalting the idol of self-righteousness above it? This does *unbelief*; for, "he that believeth not God, hath made him a LIAR, *because* he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." Here divine wisdom most eminently shines. Here all the excellencies of the divine character centre. Here the fullest display of Deity will be seen for ever. The more important the *truth* revealed, and the more striking the evidence by which the certainty of that *truth* is established; the more aggravated is the temper by which it is despised and rejected. It is this that heightens the criminality and the condemnation of the *unbeliever*, above the man who never saw the bible. But, did the man love God supremely, as the law of nature requires, the *truth* of God revealed in the gospel would be embraced with delight, and the glory of God therein discovered, would rejoice his soul. This is exercising the religion of nature; and, of course, the disposition of the human mind was suited to it in his state of nature. For this reason the opposite temper, *unbelief*, justly exposes the man to the righteous *penalty* with which the religion of his nature was guarded. But special faith in Christ not being known to man's

natural state, cannot be enjoined, nor its absence condemned, by the law of his nature; for it would be highly inequitable to require a disposition of the children which the father, as their representative, never possessed; and very unjust to punish its absence in them which was no crime in him. Hence I conclude that our *Unbelief* is opposed, not to special faith in Christ, but to that cordial, delightful reception of the gospel of truth which supreme love to God necessarily implies, of which love our federal head was possessed, and the absence of which the law of nature so righteously condemns. This view of natural religion appears to be supported by *Divine Truth*, therefore I embrace it; and therefore I give it to you.

I am, &c.

P. S. (A) p. 7. "As the Lord directs." In consequence of a hint from a friend I subjoin the following observation. The will of God revealed to our first Father respecting the tree of knowledge of good and evil, does not constitute, in my conception of it, any part of the religion of nature; because, when the injunction was disregarded, we hear no more of it. I view it only as a *Test* of obedience to Adam. It seemed reasonable that a creature capable of obedience, and called to the exercise of it, should have some means appointed for his trial: and why not this tree, as well as any thing else? It appears to be a *positive* institution designed for the proof of man's *moral* disposition. Dr. Owen says it was "*superadded* to the law of his creation." And "such, he adds, were all the laws, precepts and institutions, which the Lord afterwards gave to his church, with those, which to this day, continue as the rule and reason of their obedience." * And why might not the produce of the tree of life be the more immediately appointed medium of continuing Adam's natural life, while he remained innocent? By his being afterwards excluded from access to it, I apprehend this to be the intention of it: and that both trees derived their names, not from any thing in themselves; but, either from the divine appointment, or from the subsequent event.

* See Expos. Hebrews, ch. i. ver. 6. p. 98. Edn. fol.

 LETTER III.

DEAR SIR,

I might now have given you my thoughts on *revealed religion*; but it may not be unprofitable to make some observations on the subject of the preceding letter before we go any farther. As

Obf. I. *Extending the obligations* of the covenant of works, or the *duties* of natural religion, beyond its design, cannot tend to edification. To make any act *my* duty, by virtue of that constitution, which *Adam* was neither obliged nor qualified to perform, when set up as my federal head, is making the law of nature more extensive now than it was at first; for which I can perceive no divine authority. And, if it be not supported by the authority of God, it ought to be avoided. Had the wisdom of God *designed* that the primitive happiness of Man, in any measure, should have consisted in the exercise of faith in Christ the Saviour, as revealed in the gospel, and as received by the believer now, there is no doubt but the grace of faith would have been given him for that end: and, had he possessed it, we should have known it, and known that it was his duty to have continued in the exercise of it: but, on this thought, the scripture is silent. And, had it been *his* duty, it must have been *ours*; but, if it was not found in him when brought under the law, then the law can have no demand, either on him or on us, for the exercise of it. Qualification and obligation should be considered here as parallel and mutual; for, had any act been enjoined for which he was not qualified, the requisition had been *unjust*; and, had he possessed a disposition which was not called into exercise, the possession had been *superfluous*: the supposition of either of which

would not be to the honor of God. For this reason I conclude that, the law of nature not obliging our federal head to exercise special faith in Christ, therefore it cannot enjoin it upon us; except, as before observed, it be changed from its original intention. Let us put ourselves back into Adam's primitive state with the bible in our hands; and, as it would become us to treat its glorious truths *then*, precisely in the same manner, by the law of nature, it becomes us to act *now*, without a difference. I wish to have clear conceptions of each discovery of God to man, and to keep them distinct, for edification: And hence I state the *duties* of nature, before the *privileges* of grace; that we may grow in the knowledge of *both* according to the scriptures.

Obf. II. Nor can it be profitable to *increase* the number of *human crimes*. The hearts of those may be made sad, by such proceeding, whom the Lord has not made sad. The non-possession of special faith in Christ, is simply *an absence* of what was not suitable to the covenant of works, and therefore was not given to our federal head while he stood in that capacity; and, consequently, such *absence* can be no crime, either in him or in us. It is granted that no man has *proof* of his interest in Christ while he is destitute of special faith, because this faith is both the fruit and evidence of that interest; but, as a participation of Christ belonged not to the religion of nature, and as the exercise of this faith was not a duty of that religion, therefore the absence of it can be no sin; for all sin is a violation of the law of nature. But the same cannot be said of *Unbelief*; for this is highly criminal, both root and branch. This is a positive breach of the moral law—a rejection of the truth and authority of God. So it was at first; and so it is still. It is the hateful origin of every evil word and work. It is not only the source of open transgression, and sly hypocrisy—of careless indifference about *divine truth*, and barefaced opposition to it; but even the man of God himself is often affected with sinful distrust and fear through the influence of this insinuating foe;

much to the wounding of his own peace, and more to the dishonour of God. It dethrones the character of God in the human breast, and erects the idol Self on its ruins. The shapes it assumes are various; but its nature and tendency uniform. The unconverted world are all at enmity against God; and all express their enmity in some way or other. They are *unbelievers*. Every truth of God deserves the cordial credit and acceptance of the human mind; and, were man what he was once, and what the moral law still requires him to be, every heavenly truth would rejoice his soul, and he would triumph in its spread and establishment. Supreme love to God would glory in the exaltation of the God he loved. This disposition the law of nature found in man, and therefore enjoins the exercise of it; but *unbelief*, the direct opposite of this original, righteous temper or principle, is, strictly speaking, truly chargeable with every sin in the universe of men; and therefore God would not be just to his own character, as *the God of truth*, if he did not *set his face against it*, and treat it as it deserves. For this the sinner is justly condemned at the hand of God. Condemnation is the execution of a righteous sentence in vindication of a righteous law; whose equity is denied and despised by *unbelief*. Whereas the *absence* of special faith is no dishonor to the law, and therefore can incur no penalty; and, consequently can expose the man to no punishment.

Obf. III. We should study not to make the bible *contradict itself*. Being the word of God, it must be truth; and truth is always self-consistent. One text says, He that believeth not is condemned already, *because* he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God. And another says, He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God *abideth* on him. Hence we learn the condemning *nature* of unbelief, because it treats the glorious truth of God, and the evidence by which it is attested, as a fallacy and as foolishness. But if these passages, and others similar to them, should be understood to mean, that sinners are *condemned* and live under

the wrath of God *for ever*, BECAUSE they have not special faith in Christ; this would make one part of the scriptures contradict another. Special faith in Christ is, emphatically, the faith of God's *elect*: to whom there is *no condemnation*; because they are *saved from wrath* through him—having grace given them in Christ *before* the world began; and *not* having their iniquities imputed to them. Such portions of the sacred page, therefore, must not be interpreted to signify that the *absence* of special faith is the *cause* of condemnation; because such a thought would impeach the conduct of God. Condemnation is the fulness of punishment; punishment is the desert of sin; unbelief is the most horrid of all sin, and therefore justly condemned: but, where do we read that the Lord condemned a sinner *because* he had not given him the grace of faith! Some, indeed, in the plenitude of their zeal, have used *hard speeches* respecting the Lord's giving special faith to some and not to others; and, had he condemned those who have it not *because* they had it not, *reason would that we should bear with them*; but the contrary is the truth, and in a little time it *will be found a truth*. We should therefore be very cautious, even for our own sake, as well as for the glory of God, how we make some parts of scripture imply or teach a contrary doctrine to others.

And *the addresses to sinners*, which we find in the word of God, should be duly considered, lest we put a sense in them which will not be approved at last. Man is a voluntary agent. He is governed by motives. And, in his eternal concerns, by motives addressed to *Fear* and *Hope*. The bible abounds with strong and lively descriptions of the horrid nature and awful desert of sin in general, and of *Unbelief* in particular. It declares at large, the utter impossibility of any man's salvation in his natural state, and the absolute necessity of an interest in Christ. Here is room for all suitable pathos and energy of language, when speaking in the name of God, to the understandings and consciences of men. And such addresses are

not only lawful to be used, but incumbent, as the Lord may furnish with gifts and freedom. They are recorded with that view. Very pertinent and pointed expostulations are always at hand, and the Lord has often rendered them effectual for his own glory, when they have been employed according to his will. But when men are informed expressly, or by implication, that it is in human power to change the heart and save the man, either in whole or in part, this is virtually making him a liar; because he has, all through his word, reserved the whole glory of salvation entirely to himself. The apostle asks, *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* No person ever received the Spirit of faith by the works of the law, or ever will; and, therefore, in all our addresses, this truth should be strictly regarded, that we may not dishonor God to gratify man. And we should be equally careful not to denounce eternal death against transgressors *because* they may not be interested in Christ, and be made partakers of special faith. As *unbelievers* they righteously perish, because *unbelief* is a violation of the law of God; but the *absence* of faith in Christ to salvation can be no crime, for reasons already given, and more may occur as we proceed.

When *Fear* is excited by any motive that is not founded in *divine truth*, it cannot profit; and therefore it is useless, nay it is dangerous to attempt it. And when we speak to the *Hope* of sinners, the scriptures afford us a gracious store of encouraging arguments with which to address them. *The Lord has mercy on whom he will.* The gospel proclaims, and the holy Spirit applies, salvation to the chief of sinners. The blessings of grace and of glory are all, strictly and properly speaking, *without money and without price.* To introduce any good qualities, more or less, as a previous ground of encouragement to believe in Christ to salvation, is so far from feeding *hope* that, in proportion as the thought obtains in the breast, it excites *despair* instead of *hope*; for the convinced sinner finds, and the Lord knows, that *in his flesh dwells no good thing.* Till he is a subject of quickening grace *he is in the flesh*, and nothing but depraved nature is in him; and therefore the Lord has not prescribed any previous

goodness as a recommendation to his favor ; but has expressly declared that salvation is *not of works lest any man should boast. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.* This is divine truth, and here the sinner's hope may rest in safety, amidst all opposition, however guilty and helpless he may feel in himself ; for God will support his own truth, and save the man that *hopes in his mercy* in Christ Jesus. Every one knows that the import of the term Gospel is glad tidings ; but, if a participation of its blessings were suspended on such previous qualifications as no man ever had, or can possibly possess, it would be an empty sound, and unworthy of notice. The supposition, therefore, is destructive to the hope of man, and a dishonor to the *name* of God.

Obf. IV. We should likewise duly consider the *nature of the subject*. The covenant of works requires a sinless nature and perfect obedience ; but, were the man thus furnished, he would not need Christ the Saviour, nor could he receive him to salvation. He would delight in the truth of Christ revealed, as said before, with holy Angels, but of Christ the Saviour, *for himself*, he could have no knowledge. The whole voice of that covenant to man is, *obey and live—transgress and die*. It requires, *of man himself*, perfection of obedience, in order to enjoy the life which it promises ; and, in default of which, it threatens death ; and here it ends. Whereas the object of special faith to justification of life, is the righteousness of Christ alone, which is *out of the man*, and belongs wholly to another constitution ; and therefore can, in no sense whatever, be included in the *preceptive authority* of the law of nature. The moral law indeed *approves* the righteousness of Christ, because it is its glorious end and fulfilment ; but it neither provides nor reveals his righteousness ; and therefore it cannot *command* the man to be a participant of it, nor *condemn* him *because* the blessing is not bestowed upon him. For, if so, then *Law* and *Gospel* would cease to be distinct constitutions—the supposition of which, would not only perplex instead of profiting the human mind ;

but it would cast a cloud of confusion over all the dealings of God with man. There is *divine truth* in each covenant; but they are so evidently distinct in *design* respectively, that to make one interfere with the other, is, if not to destroy, at least to eclipse, the glory of both. As it becomes us not to separate what God has united; so, it is equally incumbent upon us, not to confound what he has made distinct.

Besides, when a man exercises special faith in Christ, he is *not under* the covenant of works; because he is the subject of that life which was unknown to it. No man does, or can receive Christ, even so much as to *rely* upon him for salvation, without a spiritual view of his sufficiency to save him, and the impossibility of being saved by another. Then *the things of the Spirit of God* are so far from being *foolishness to him*, that they are beautiful and glorious. He esteems them altogether suitable to his case and worthy of God. This man is *born again*. He is the subject of spiritual life, or he could not put forth a spiritual act; but such is the feeblest exercise of special faith in Christ; and, therefore, he must be regenerated, in order of nature, before he can believe in Christ to salvation. His life testifies his previous federal union with Christ and interest in him; but, as this faith was unknown to Adam's covenant, consequently that covenant can have no more *demand* on the *exercise* than the *communication* of it. If not the one, then not the other: and hence it cannot enjoin this faith in Christ of which I now speak. Once more, if this faith be required by the law of works, then, when it is performed, it is a work of the law, and of course excluded from salvation. *Law and Grace, Faith and Works*, cannot be more clearly distinguished and opposed than they are in the word of God; by which we learn the difference of one from the other. The sinner is saved by grace, not by the law. *The just lives by faith*, not by works. *It is of faith, that it might be by grace*. This evidence, without addition, will justify my saying, that faith in Christ to salvation is, manifestly, *not* a work of the law; and, therefore, *cannot be commanded* by the law of works.

I have given my friend these four observations, to illustrate and confirm, what appears to me, *Divine Truth* in the law of nature—not to lessen the nature, malignity, or desert of sin, but simply to promote the glory of God.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

DEAR SIR,

REVEALED Religion includes natural; but not vice versa. A man cannot be a child of God without being his creature. He cannot be a saved sinner without being a subject of moral government, and having sinned against divine authority. But, it does not follow that, because he is a creature of God, therefore he is his adopted son; and, because he hath sinned, therefore he shall be saved. The obligations of natural religion, with the penalty in case of disobedience, are inseparable from his state as a creature; but the whole of *revealed religion*, while it involves the other, is superior in its blessings to man, as being the effect of sovereign grace. Not included in natural religion, not inferible from it, nor to be measured by it. Though both are comprized in the scheme of infinite Wisdom, yet I consider natural as a medium for the display of *revealed religion*, and not revealed as an institution simply in aid of natural religion; because, if so, would they not have been co-extensive? and every subject of natural religion be made a participant of the blessings of revealed? But, as this is not true in fact, I conclude it was not designed. Hence I denominate all the blessings of grace, from first to last, *supernatural*; no part of which, nor interest in any, belonged to man by nature; the whole being the result of sovereign pleasure, and the bequest of richest grace.

Under *revealed religion* I include the whole scheme of grace, from God's choice of his people in Christ, to the consummation of their final glory. And though every part may not have been so clearly discovered from the beginning, as in these last days, yet the centre and security of all the rest, the salvation of Christ, has been known and received in all ages of time. He has not been without witness from the first to the present day. *Revealed religion* includes its *object*, its *blessings*, and its *recipients*: the knowledge and enjoyment of which object and blessings, are *above* the state of man by nature. The Most High is still to be considered as the creator of man. The relation subsisting between God and man, as his creature, is properly indissoluble; and must be so while both continue to exist; except we observe that his people are liberated from the claims of the legal covenant, *as such*, by the mediation of the Lord of glory—I know no change besides.

I. The *object* of revealed religion is the God of all grace—a *covenant God in Christ Jesus*. In this relation he is known and enjoyed by all who believe to salvation. Into his eternal, immutable good will must we look, for all the happiness of all his people, in time and eternity. *I will be their God, and they shall be my people*. The union subsisting between Christ and his Church, as members with their head, and as a bride with her husband, when professedly considered, should always be traced to this origin; because no other reason can be given for the union itself, or for the blessings inseparably flowing therefrom. When we speak of the shepherd laying down his life for his sheep, or of sinners being redeemed by the blood of Christ; such effects can have no adequate cause but the unchangeable will of the God of all grace. In the constitution of the person of Christ, in his mystical union to his body the church, and the blessings they enjoy by virtue thereof to the glory of God, he has openly shewn us his *manifold wisdom*. Yea, he *has abounded towards us in ALL wisdom and prudence*. For, not in the works of *creation* alone, nor only in the disposals of *providence*, but also, and indeed more especially, in the displays of his *grace*, he *worketh all things*, with unfailing energy, according to the counsel of his own Will.

II. The *blessings* of revealed religion are not only never to be lost, as Adam forfeited his ; but, deriving from a nearer and higher relation to God, are more ennobling and important in themselves than the blessings of innocence. “ Our faith, Dr. Goodwin says, and God’s revelation to us, is *supernatural*, “ being such as were utterly *above the due and right* of pure “ nature in Adam.”* The gift of Christ, and being made one with him, I consider not merely the first blessing in order of nature, but likewise in dignity and glory ; and, as this ensures all subsequent blessings, I receive it as the centre and substance of all. He is *the Head of the Church and the Saviour of the Body*. Though they were chosen in him as *having done neither good nor evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand*; and though he was the *exalted one chosen out of the people*, not as *sinners* but as *creatures*; yet it is evident, from his being their Saviour, that the intervention of sin made a part of the plan. Hence his people are called *vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory*. It is in consequence of this union that *their sins were laid on him, and not imputed to them*—that he who knew no sin was *made sin* for them, and that *they are made the righteousness of God in him*. This is the reason why they have ever stood *accepted in the beloved, justified from all things, and all their trespasses forgiven them*: for our God is in one mind. *and who can turn him ?* Pursuant to this union also *they receive, not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God; that they might know the things which are freely given them of God*. Hence *the holy Spirit of truth*, in due time, quickens all the heirs of glory, makes them partakers of a new life, ascertains their relation to God, and dwells in them as an earnest of their eternal inheritance. He *opens the eyes of their understandings, convinces them of sin, and glorifies Christ in their esteem*. That which is *born of the Spirit is spirit*; but not the Spirit himself; for then there would be no distinction, and the declaration would be void of meaning. The principle of grace implanted in regeneration, by the blessed Spirit, is both manifested and main-

* See his Works, ut supra. p. 54.

tained in receiving Christ crucified; in living on him, and walking with him, as the Lord our righteousness, our atoning sacrifice, and our interceding high-priest. In a life of faith there is fellowship with God, Father, Son, and Spirit, enjoyed; peace of conscience felt; sanctification promoted, and the name of the Lord glorified. And, living on the fulness of Christ, the man is *kept by the power of God unto that salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time*. It is not the Spirit of God in the man that believes, repents, and so on; for then the man would be *passive* in all the exercises of the divine life, and no spiritual *action* could be predicated of him; but, the fact is, having life from Christ, as the branch from the root, it is *the man himself* who exercises these graces, as supply is given from the root, and not another for him. I speak thus, because the personal Spirit of God is independent, and can, and does act where, and when he pleases; whereas the believer, who is the subject of his gracious work, is constrained to say, *I cannot do the things that I would. When I would do good, evil is present with me. To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not*. It is not a corrupt principle in man that believes and loves God, nor is it the rational mind under the influence of that principle; for, if so, then the carnal mind would not be enmity against him—but it is the man himself in the exercise of that divine principle which was wrought in him by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Hence he is said to be a *spiritually minded* man. Again, the holy Spirit is emphatically called *the Comforter*. But how does he administer comfort? By shewing the man the things that are freely given him of God—by a manifestation of Christ and all his benefits. But these are *spiritual* things, and therefore are to be *spiritually discerned*. Whereas, if the man be not partaker of a spiritual principle capable of discerning spiritual things, then the holy Spirit *takes of the things of Christ to shew them to HIMSELF*, and not to the MAN, and consequently cannot be *the Comforter*; because no man can be comforted by what he neither sees nor knows. Once more, the man possesses the

same mental, rational powers when dead in sin as when human nature was innocent. When, therefore, the holy Spirit makes him a new creature in Christ, it is not done by changing or improving *the old man*, for the principle of depravity is immutable, and a state of innocence cannot be restored; but, it is effected by working in him that life whose nature, taste and tendency correspond with the blessed above; and consequently must proceed from the same *source*, must converse with the same *object*, must be supplied from the same *fulness*, and can be perfected only in the same *fruition*. Now we consider

III. The *participants* of these favors. It was said, near the close of the first letter, that natural religion was *necessary*, but revealed the effect of *sovereign grace*; and here it may be safely asserted, that though the *former* comprized the whole human race, yet not so the *latter*. Respecting the salvation of Christ, which is the glory of revealed religion, the great Paul gives you my thoughts concerning its *participants*. He says, the *Election* has obtained it, and the rest were blinded. I endure all things for the *Elect's* sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Those who had grace given them in Christ before the world began, who were the objects of his *predestinating* knowledge and love, are *saved*, and *called* with an *holy calling*, are *justified* and *glorified*. They are *predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son*. By which you see that their regeneration and sanctification are as certain as their final glory. The truth is, they could not enjoy the latter without the experience of the former. Nor could they be said to be saved *from* their sin, if they still continued the *slaves* of its *dominion*, or the *subjects* of its *being* for ever. And we are *confident* that where the holy Spirit has begun his good work, in the hearts of his people, he will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ.

I always follow the maxim myself, in searching after the mind of God in his word, which I have given to you, namely, that, as all truth is from him, so it is always self-consistent.

When, therefore, I find any truth in the sacred page, if declared but *once*, I conclude that no other part can contradict it. And, if I believe the scriptures to be the book of God, I am constrained to treat it in this manner in honor to his name. Hence I have not enlarged on the three thoughts of this letter, as, perhaps, you might have expected; but I may have occasion, more largely to consider, or more fully to illustrate them, before I finish my design.

Sin was in the world, for man had transgressed. He stood obnoxious to the just but awful sentence of death; both for himself, and as the head of all his posterity. All happiness was fled. All communion with God was at an end. Guilt and shame prevailed in the mind, and hope of deliverance there was none; because the law of nature being violated, or the covenant of works broken, it bound the sinner over to righteous condemnation; and there he must have remained for ever, like fallen Angels, had not the Lord *revealed* himself to man in a *relation*, or under a *character*, unknown before. Man was fallen from his righteousness and become a miserable creature. No hope of help could be afforded from his former state. The authority of the law was trodden under foot, and the majesty of the Legislator insulted; neither of which could be done with impunity. But the sinner was so far from expressing a desire of former friendship with his Maker, that he fled from his presence. And, instead of acknowledging his sin, or shewing penitent sorrow before God for his conduct, he attempted to extenuate his crime by laying the blame on his holy Creator. "The woman whom *thou* gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Here, though he confessed the fact of eating, you see there is yet a strong desire, if not to *justify*, at least to *excuse* his conduct, and to *cover his transgression*. He would fain have *concealed* it both from his own, and from the eye of his Judge. This disposition has manifestly descended to all his posterity. We first wish, if possible, to elude the sight of the judge; but, if that fail, then, rather than ingenuously confess our sin, we would make him an accessory by the circumstances in which we are placed; and

virtually, if not expressly, say *we are tempted of God*. As, after the first transgression, so, to the present hour, *the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be*. This description of fallen human nature, *as such*, is unexceptionably just, without an effort or desire towards restoration. In every sin the will of man is set against the will of God, and determined on his own purpose. Hence it is evident that, if *repentance* had been proposed as the condition of forgiveness, there was no disposition in man to repent: nor is there a better temper in the descendants towards God than in the progenitor. Human nature is wholly gone from the source of *purity*, and is altogether defiled; and, for that reason, were there no hope in *revealed religion*, the whole human race must perish for ever. And even with the hope of the Gospel before us, in the sacred page, not a creature would be saved, were not the Spirit of God to accompany the written word, with his omnipotent grace, to the souls of men. It has been said above, that the salvation of Christ is the glory of *revealed religion*; but, as salvation is never enjoyed at the expence of the law, the sinner's mind is no less opposed to the one than the other: for, is the law severe in his view, because it cannot connive at his sin? The Gospel is foolishness in his esteem, because it makes him a debtor to sovereign mercy for every favor in hand or hope; and justifies the law in the fullest extent of its holy nature and righteous sanction. For the Gospel is no more a friend to sin than the Law, though it considers and treats the sinner in a different manner.

The whole of *revealed religion* we learn from the bible. Every effort therefore to supply its supposed defect is like a moth or a spider attempting to prop a sinking world. Though the attempt is equally vain, yet it is not equally innocent; because every such supposed defect is a bold impeachment of Jehovah's character. And all disbelief of its truth, is making man to be wiser and better than God. There are two texts of scripture which, in a peculiar manner, illustrate and confirm each other. In addressing the serpent, after the first transgression,

the Lord God said, *the seed of the woman shall bruise thy head.* And, four thousand years afterwards, the Apostle says, *for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* The same enemy to man is meant by the serpent and the devil. The same friend of sinners is pointed out by the seed of the woman and the Son of God. And, by his destroying the devil's works, we understand what is intended by bruising the serpent's head. This shews us that the bible contains an uniform record of *revealed religion*; and that christianity is, when properly explained, neither more nor less than a *full display* of that salvation which was preached to fallen Adam in paradise. Hence it appears that the Son of God is, in no sense whatever, by his incarnation and ministry, the founder of a *new* religion; for, though our institutions for public acts of worship may differ from those of the old testament; yet, if they be not performed in the spirit of faith they profit us nothing: because the nature, the object, and the blessings of revealed religion can never change. The essence of this religion consists in reconciliation to God, access to his presence and fellowship with him, as known in a mediator; whether experienced by *Adam*, by *Paul*, or by *you*. Every departure from it is a denial of it; and every denial of it must, in effect, leave the sinner in ruinous despair. Our Immanuel is the mediator of a *new* and better covenant. Access to God is by a *new* and living way. And, those who enjoy fellowship with him, are *new* creatures. I use the term *new* in this place, not in opposition to the religion of *corrupt* nature, for that is not of God, nor worthy of him; but in distinction from the *old*, or primitive religion of man; which the Lord founded; and, whilst it continued, approved; but which ceased on the introduction of sin, and will never be renewed: for *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*, both in the glory of his person, and the fulness of his salvation. There *is* not now, and there never *was*, any other name under heaven given among men whereby we *must* be saved. The religion of nature was holy, honorable,

and perfect, in the relation it held to the rest of the plan of infinite wisdom; and though it knew not the spirit of adoption—communion with God in Christ—nor any of the blessings of the new covenant; yet their absence was no defect in it, because they were not suited to its *nature*, nor the experience of them adapted to its *design*. The purpose of saving sinners by the cross of Christ is eternal; and hence he is said to redeem them by his precious blood, according to his *fore-ordination* before the foundation of the world: and, therefore, as soon as sin appeared, the promise of the woman's seed was given to be the object of faith for salvation to the end of the world. This glorious doctrine has been taught by the Spirit of Christ in all his holy prophets since the world began. This is the soul of the whole word of God. This is the sun that illuminates the firmament of Scripture. For perpetuating this truth the bible exists, and for the experimental knowledge of it the Spirit is given, to the present hour. Here shines *divine truth*, in its splendid beauties and its richest dress for ever. Was it said, in the time of *natural religion*, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die?" In the time of *revealed*, it is said respecting Christ, and with a voice not less peremptory, "All that are incensed against *him* shall be ashamed." Was the *first* accomplished? so shall the *last*: for it proceeds from the same truth, and is armed with the same power.

When I hear the voice of God to the first man, as the federal head of human nature, I so far understand his will as to see *divine truth* in *natural religion*. It came from God. It was worthy of him. It was directed to his glory. When I hear him speaking to the serpent of the seed of the woman, in the presence of my fallen, guilty father, and see how that promise is illustrated, explained, and fulfilled in after ages; I see *divine truth* also in *revealed religion*. Man had destroyed himself; but, in order to save his fallen children, God sent forth his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. To this incarnate Son of God, as the substitute for sin-

ners, and as suffering for their sin, have the faithful been led for salvation in all generations. Here, the will of God and theirs have united. All his perfections are exalted in their salvation; and they glorify his name for the wondrous grace. But there are *three* characters whose sentiments I shall consider, and shew you, as concisely as I can, that, notwithstanding their confidence, *divine truth* is not the ground of their hope. No man can *now* be a subject of natural religion; and, therefore, if revealed be the object of his opposition, he has no religion at all; and, consequently, let his hope be founded on whatever it may, *divine truth* cannot support it. The *Deist*, the *Socinian*, and the *Arminian*, are the characters I intend. In one point of view, indeed, there are but *two* characters in the world. The *one* expects happiness and the favor of God from *personal* goodness. This class, at present, includes a vast majority of mankind. However diversely circumstanced in other respects, and however differently denominated between themselves; yet, in this particular, they all unite. The *other* has no dependence for peace with God and final enjoyment of him, but on the *sacrifice* and *obedience* of the Lord of glory. The cordial and grateful language of them all is, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. With *these* you will find *divine truth*; but not with *those*. The hope of the *former* shall perish; but the hope of the *latter* shall not make them ashamed. But I shall give you a letter on each of the *three* characters named above in order.

See Evan. Mag. May, 1797. p. 186.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

DEAR SIR,

IT is a maxim I cannot forget, that Truth is self-consistent. The contrary is peculiar to Error. That God is *merciful* is true; but, had it not been for revealed religion, man would no more have tasted the mercy of God than fallen angels; nor would the

thought have entered into his mind. What apprehension had Adam of mercy when filled with guilty fear at the voice of the Lord ! no more could his descendants have entertained a hope of mercy, for it would never have been known, had not Jehovah himself revealed it. Not even the *Deist* with all his supposed knowledge, could have made the discovery.

No Mediator was known to the religion of nature ; nor was it needful he should ; for man was furnished with such powers of rectitude in himself as were suited to his station ; and, therefore, in case of disobedience, he had nothing before him but death. The law is, in its very nature, a stranger to mercy. Of course the man who professes to believe the *mercy* of God, and yet denies the divine authority of the bible, is, to say the least, the most absurdly inconsistent of any character whatever. No man can prove, nor even shew it to be probable, that God is merciful to sinners, without the bible. You say it may be hoped, as by Pagans. But the hope they have is mixed with so much fear, as plainly manifests they have no solid ground on which to rest. Though you allow their sacrifices to have some trace of reference to the divine appointment of sacrifices, yet it is evident they have lost the true design of their original institution. No question on divine mercy or forgiveness, can receive a satisfactory answer from the man who never had, or who disavows, the word of God. That God is *just*, appears in every human bosom ; and that the conviction is deeply rooted in the conscience, is demonstrated by the various measures taken either to quiet or to forget its testimony ; but, that he is willing to forgive, or that he ever was merciful, without the mediation of Christ, was never known since the world began. Universal fact or experiment confirms the observation. The prince of darkness can transform himself into an angel of light ; and, if such be the will of God, can so pervert the minds of men, that they will adopt lampoon for argument, and ridicule for reason. Not in securing their *temporal* interests, but in the vast concerns of an *eternal* world. *The god of this world blinds the minds of unbelievers, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of*

Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. And, hence, they put darkness for light, and light for darkness. These are the men who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight. This delusion may feed the jocund hour, or serve amidst the busy scenes of life; but—the airy phantom flies the dying pillow, and leaves its abject votary in a dismal deep! Death dissolves the fatal charm; unmasks the man; shews him to himself; and transmits him to the presence of that God, whose mercy never triumphed over justice; and whose pardons were never known but in the blood of the Cross. Oh, what an infatuation! to hope for mercy, and yet despise the bible! What a conception of Deity must such men form to themselves! A lover of human folly! a patron of detestable vice! a friend of infernal rage! an accomplice in traducing his own character! But he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. The day will declare it. Again,

It is certain that creation in general, and the human race in particular, had a beginning. What abounds with such vicissitudes could neither have been eternal, nor self-created. In what confusion and contradiction have the minds of men been enveloped, on this subject, who have been without a bible! Nor could it be otherwise without a miracle. A lisping infant can speak to this question with as much precision as a sage philosopher, if the word of truth be discarded. And, what wonder! it is by faith, and not by reason, that we understand the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Not by faith in the writings of Greece or Rome; but by faith in the Word of God. And what man, who acts rationally, but desires to know his own original; and how, and when, creation around him began to be? The bible gives him information. Information worthy of its author, and satisfactory to his mind. How careless, how stupid, must that man be, with all his sincerity, who can eat and sleep, like the beasts of the field, and think no higher than they! How irrational, must the infidel appear, place his integrity as high as you please, who shuts his eyes against the light! The bible is the most

ancient of all books, and carries us back to the remotest antiquity. It gives the *origin* of things. It furnishes the *history* of man in a manner that satisfies the inquisitive mind. It opens to him the treasures of creating wisdom ; shews him the steps of disposing providence ; and draws a line of truth before him for the space of thousands of years—concerning the greatest and best part of which, if not the whole, with what fable doubt must he be perplexed, without this book in his hand ! But here a light directs his enquiries, and feeds his contemplative powers, with rational pleasure, to the glory of God, through all the *changing* scenes of time, till it terminates in the fulness of eternal day ! A feast that nothing can supply but the book of truth. A feast to which the *Deist* is a stranger ; and, evidently, a stranger by choice ; because he treats it with a sneer of contempt. The bible has weathered all storms. It has triumphed over all opposition, from the days of *Julian* and *Porphyry*, even to the days of *Thomas Paine* ; and will continue to triumph, either in the final ruin of its assailants, or in their conversion to God. I will not call the *Deist* credulous, for his faith is not easily obtained or supported ; but it is bold and prophane, not comparable to any man's besides : for he must believe “ through thick and thin ” to keep himself in countenance. Mr. Leland says, “ There is nothing that has a wider swallow than *Infidelity*, which, though it makes the slightest difficulty on the side of revelation an insuperable objection ; can admit the most absurd and unaccountable suppositions in the world in favor of a darling scheme.” If the bible be not of God, who can account for its *continuance* in the world ! It has been assailed by sap and by storm ; by pretended friends and professed foes ; and yet it abides ! In short, who can account for its *existence at all* ? It must originate with God, with devils, or with men. Not with *devils* or *bad* men ; for they would not describe their motives of conduct, their character, and their end, in the language of scripture. Nor could *good* men fabricate it, had they been willing ; for, as they could not know the secrets of God which

the bible reveals, so, neither would they assume his character, nor speak in his style. And not only so, the bible not merely remains in our hands; but the evidence of its heavenly origin is every day *increasing*; and will *proceed* to increase till all be fulfilled. Every Jew you see—every prophecy accomplished—every sinner saved—is demonstration that the scriptures are of God. The invention of letters also, I consider as an amazing proof of God's superintending the concerns of men; and though the good of his *creatures* is effected by it, in various views, yet I scruple not to believe that the good of his *church* was the more interesting object of his design; that his word might be transmitted from age to age, till the mystery of his will should be finished in the salvation of his people. Much is said likewise by our *unbelievers* about "the nature and fitness of things." This is set up as the unerring standard by which they profess to appreciate the truth of every proposition. Let us look at it for a moment on the following subject. The great God is worthy of supreme love from man, and to be worshipped in a way that is suitable to his own perfections and majesty, or he is not. If he is *not*, we do well to banish all thought about him, and take our own course. But, where is the man who can do this! A presumptive evidence arises hence, that this side of the proposition cannot be admitted: and, therefore, if he *be* worthy of supreme love and suitable worship, then I ask, Is there any thing derogatory to this said "nature and fitness of things," that the Most High should prescribe to man, *how* this supreme love should be expressed; and *how* this suitable worship should be performed? If so, it must be because man is a better judge of the matter than his Maker. But, if the infinitely blessed God be *competent* to judge for himself; and, if his judgment is *superior* to that of man; then no possible excuse can be formed for him who rejects the written word, and looks to what *he* calls "the nature and fitness of things," as the guide of his conduct in his dealings with God. Is there a man upon earth who is able to form a just judgment of the *dishonour* done to God's moral government by sin? to say *how* transgression appears in *his* sight? to tell us whether he *will*, or how he *can*, forgive the sinner, without revelation? In

what a deplorable state of guilty ignorance then, must that man be, who *willingly* turns away from the only friend that can answer such important questions ! Besides,

Can any one soberly suppose that man appeared in his *present moral state*, as he came from his Maker's hand ! Or that God would have *destroyed* the creatures he has made, in *wantonness* and *sport* ! That human nature is the subject of vicious habits, is confessed by heathen moralists, as well as christian writers : but, " whence is evil ? " is an insolvable problem, an unanswerable query, where the bible is not known. When thinking men saw the perpetual prevalence of moral evil, whether Greeks or Romans, and the scriptures not with them ; is it any surprize that some thought of an *evil god*, in order to account for such an appearance ! Perhaps it was the best conjecture they could adopt. But we have a sure guide for our judgment. Read the life of *Pharoah*—of *Nebuchadnezzar*—of *Alexander*—of *Cæsar* ; whom *Prideaux* calls, " the greatest pest and plague that mankind then had "—and you will have a *spice* of what man is to man. I call it a *spice*, because these are only four names of all the tribes of men ; and, compared with them, there is *not one* but would exceed in every vice, if left to himself. It is not sufficient to say that " man is a wolf to man ; " for, if external circumstances concurred, and depravity not restrained, all would be prey on which he could lay his hand. And even holy mother Church, what destructive device has she left untried, what nation or people have escaped her cruel arm, under the specious *profession* of " doing God service ! " little thinking that, while they were gratifying their own abominable passions, they were erecting a *monument* to perpetuate the truth of God's word ! And indeed were it not for the withholding hand of him who sits in the heavens, the world would soon be an *Aceldama* at large. Such an effect must have a cause. But who can declare the cause, without the instruction of the sacred page ? And it is no less evident, that God has overturned and overturned the cities and the nations of the earth, and swept them with the besom of destruction ; and that he will continue to do it till the end shall come. And why ? Because his crea-

tures are innocent and harmless? Because he delighteth in blood? Nothing less. But man has revolted and rebelled, and is up in arms against his Maker and his Lord; the rights of whose throne are indisputably equitable; the truth and purity of whose government are inviolably sacred; and cannot be transferred to another: and, therefore, while man continues to transgress, the Most High will continue to assert the authority of his law, and to maintain the supremacy of his dominion. The *Deist* may see the outside of these facts; but the springs and reasons of them are only to be known by the word of truth. This book he discards; and therefore, remains in the dark. A darkness with which he pretends he is not affected; and from which he has nothing to fear: but, either the God of truth must change, or he has nothing but fear before him for ever. Jehovah has not preserved his book in the world to this day, and made it his power to the salvation of millions, to have it run down with impunity at last; as though he were tired of pleading its cause—No, my friend, his word is truth; and being, himself, the God of Truth, he will defend and bless it for all the ends of his own glory, in first giving it to man. Once more,

The *use* for which the Spirit of Truth employs the scriptures, in *the salvation of sinners*, is an irrefragable evidence that they are from heaven: for the God of glory would never reproach his character by treating a lie as he does his word. That men are changed from vice to virtue—that the *dead in sin are quickened together with Christ*—that they are *called out of darkness into his marvellous light*—are facts which cannot be made plainer than they are. They may be disputed,—they may be denied; and what may not, if men are so disposed? But what truth then can be safely embraced? However, it should be always remembered, that these weapons are never used when better can be found; and that they are the artillery only of weak opponents, and of a bad cause. When men are conscious that they have truth on their side, especially the truth of God, they know it can speak for itself, and that it is neither ashamed to

be known, nor afraid to be examined. That sinners are saved, is a delightful truth : and it is equally a truth, that *the scriptures are able to make us wise to salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus.* They are used by the Holy Spirit to that end. Is the heart described as *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?* Is it said, that man *has destroyed himself,* and that *by the law is the knowledge of sin?* The sinner being favored with the spirit of life, feels and confesses the affecting truth. He no longer justifies himself, nor trifles with his sin. The arrows of the Almighty stick fast in his heart, and refuge fails him. (Put the careless infidel in this man's stead, and we should hear no more of his boasted confidence.) *The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. He has finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness.* Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute iniquity. The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, opens his understanding, that he understands the scriptures ; and reads them with new eyes and new affections. Christ is revealed and embraced. The man is reconciled to God ; and glories in a free and full salvation for the chief of sinners. He has the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of his sins ; and finds he has redemption in the blood of Christ, according to the riches of his glorious grace. Now the divine lawgiver is justified in all his claims. His holy law is an object of delight : and Christ, the law-fulfiller, is his trust and joy for ever.

“ 'Tis this, and only this, subdues the fear of Death.”

The conquest is gained, and by faith he antedates the triumph of a glorious immortality. Holiness to the Lord is written on his heart, and is pursued in his life, that God may be glorified. The divine perfections and purposes are displayed in *the scriptures of truth.* The love of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in the design and work of salvation, is there recorded. He reads and understands : and as the views of the divine glory brighten,

his heart is united, and he cleaves to the Lord. *The love of Christ constrains him to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes.* He may be called to suffer tribulation, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, for the sake of his master; but he is *more than conqueror in all these things through him that loved him.* Being taught by the same spirit, as the old testament saints, he can address the Lord as they did. *Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the joy and rejoicing of my heart.* These are facts—facts manifest to all the world, and must have a cause. The *Deist* may attribute them to what cause he pleases; but it will be ultimately found, that no cause can be adequate to such effects, except the power of *Divine Truth* impressed on the mind by the spirit of holiness. It is in this way that God the Spirit *uses* the scriptures in the salvation of sinners. The Infidel may laugh at it as enthusiastic cant: but, he would be mortified to know, that his contemptuous jeers confirm the book he despises; for the bible says, *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness to him.* So that his very conduct, as an *Infidel*, proves the bible to be of God. Our nation abounds with a character, from which, indeed, we have not an open disavowal, or rejection of the scriptures, as from the *Deist*, (whether from motives of prudence or of conscience, I say not,) and yet the real importance of *Divine Truth* appears to be equally neglected by one as by the other: and, therefore, I may venture to say respecting *both*—they may *think* they have religion enough—they may *flatter* themselves with the hope of happiness—but, according to the testimony of eternal truth, while God lives to defend it, they *must* be born again, or perish for ever. The name *Christian* is not yet a reproach; though many, by words and actions, appear highly to disrelish what constitutes that character; for *living faith in Christ* has no favor either from their creed or their conduct. Nevertheless without *the Spirit of Christ* they are none of his. To be a friend of Christ in *name* and an enemy to him in *heart*, will leave a man in an awful state another day. The man who has found a *wounded spirit* healed by the God of grace, can never treat his bible with indifference, much less with lampoon, least of all

with contempt. He has no objection to be called an *Entusiast*, while the Spirit of truth conducts him, by the word, to the salvation of God. And, though the *Deist*, confident of his sufficiency, may now sport himself with his own deceivings; yet—what follows? Jehovah says, *Ye have set at nought my counsel—I will mock when your fear cometh.* Prov. i. 25, 26.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

DEAR SIR,

CHRISTIANITY is neither more nor less than the last dispensation of revealed religion. The way of salvation has been one from the first appearance of sin until now. It may be called a *new œconomy*, but a *new religion* it is not. And I have three witnesses to prove my assertion, whose authority will not presently be overthrown. *Peter* informs us, that the prophets had the Spirit of Christ, and that, by them, he testified before hand *the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.* *Paul* told Agrippa, that he preached none other things than those which the prophets and Moses said should come: that *Christ should suffer*, and that he should be *the first that should rise from the dead.* And, *our Lord*, in discourse with his disciples said, O fools, and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to *have suffered* these things, and to *enter into his glory*? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning *himself.* By which you see—1. That the *sufferings and glory of Christ* made the capital subject of the old testament ministry and faith. Had not this been the fact, there had been no propriety in our Lord's reproving the slowness of his disciples to believe it.—2. That the Spirit of Christ in the prophets is a distinct, divine person, from the Father and the Son. *Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy.*

A virtue, or property, is not a personal voluntary agent ; and, therefore, can teach neither prophets nor apostles. None but God can know the secrets of his will ; but *the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God* : and hence they are *revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit*. It follows therefore,—3. That Christianity is only the ultimate discovery of the will of God, respecting the salvation of sinners. For what purpose, but the knowledge of this truth, were men inspired to write the scriptures ? If sinners could have been saved another way, Christ was a needless character. If we could have known his salvation by other means, to the glory of God, why was his word put into our hands ? Take this truth out of it, and the bible would be no more than another history. *History* ! did I say ? Nay, consider it as an *history* ; and what is it but a narration of facts concerning this glorious truth ! Who can read the *history* of Abraham and his posterity, in the line of Jacob, without seeing an inseparable connection between that Patriarch and the promised Messiah, the incarnate Son of God ! To *Abraham* and to his *seed* was preached the same gospel as to *us*. And, if you read the song of the Virgin and of Zacharias, you will observe that the advent of Christ is celebrated, *emphatically*, as the fulfilment of the ancient promise made to Abraham their father. Though the promise, when accomplished, might appear with circumstances of additional glory and fulness ; yet it was not unexpected and new in itself : it brought them the same truth which their fathers had seen and embraced, and by which they were saved, for thousands of years before. And, who can read the *history* of ancient sacrifices, without seeing the salvation of Christ represented by them ! Had Moses, Noah, or Abel devised them, would they have been acceptable to God ? The thought is foolishness. The practice would have been profane and cruel. Consider it as it is, a *divine appointment*, and it throws a light all over the sacred page, which shews us the significant meaning of sacrificial language, when used of Christ, without which we must have remained in the dark to the end of the world.

The character now before me *professes* to receive the bible as

the word of God; and therefore is to be considered in *some* respects, in a different light from the *Deist*—though the *real* difference between them is not so great as perhaps may be apprehended. For my own part, I conceive the one to be as *far* from the kingdom of God as the other. If a man tells me the scriptures are of divine original, and yet denies the truth of what constitutes the only sun in that firmament; where is the *essential* difference between him and the man who denies the bible altogether? Has not the *Deist* the advantage of his neighbour? We must not use the word *Socinian*, because this is deemed “a term of reproach.” As we are not governed by mere sound, let it therefore be *Unitarian*. That this man’s religion and hope can have no firmer basis in *Divine Truth* than that of the *Deist*, will appear in the sequel. Christianity includes, among other important articles, the *conquest* which Christ obtained over his own, and the enemies of his people. Hence he is said by *David*, to have *led* captivity captive; and by *Paul*, to have made a show of them openly, *triumphing* over them in his cross, or in himself. If men believe not, devils know it, for they feel his *triumphant conquest*. Nor can christianity be properly understood, or represented, where this thought is omitted. When a person takes a book *professedly* written on “the evidences of Christianity,” he considers himself invited to attend a *royal triumph*; and while the cavalcade is passing before him, he indulges a pleasing hope of beholding the personage for whose honour it is said to be designed. But, sometimes, how sadly disappointed! The procession is closed, and—*No Conqueror!* Behold, he is *dead*—or *detained*—or so *disguised* as not to be known! This is the effect of reading Mr. *Clarke’s* reasons for being a christian. For style and composition, it is good; but, on this subject, it is essentially defective. There is not a sentence, either on the great salvation of God, on the nature and necessity of faith in Christ, the Saviour of sinners, or on the gracious work of the Holy Spirit; without which, the bible knows nothing of Christianity; and, without the experience of which, I cannot be saved. And, with what propriety a “religion” so defective can be esteemed

"the source of the *richest* CONSOLATIONS, as Dr. Toulmin expresses it, and "the ground of the *noblest* HOPE;" I confess I cannot understand; for, however convincing it may prove to the *reason* of a Deist, it affords no encouragement to the *wounded conscience*. "*Forgiveness*," indeed, is once mentioned as "*possible*," p. 13. but it is added, that "repentance and reformation are the conditions" of it; which is so far from laying a foundation for "*hope and consolation*," that it leaves the man, who is sensible of his sinful state, in despair of salvation for ever—it dishonours the moral character of God—and it contradicts the express word of truth, which declares, *without shedding of blood there is no remission*. And once the term "*mediator*" occurs, p. 14. But not a syllable is there connected with it, by which you are to learn either the *nature* of the office, the *ends* of its appointment, or the *blessings* enjoyed in consequence of it, according to the scriptures. For, whatever may be said of a "*patriot*," as it bears no analogy to our Lord's mediation, it is totally irrelevant, and therefore impertinent—it is evidently calculated to lead the reader away from the subject, and therefore dangerous—and, consequently, where the *reasons* for being a christian are given, *such* a term should never appear.

Nor can it answer any valuable purpose, to write on "The practical efficacy of the unitarian doctrine;" if that doctrine gives no account of "the depravity of human nature, the deity and atonement of Christ, justification by the imputation of his righteousness, the trinity, and satisfaction to the divine justice:"* for these doctrines are as essential to christianity, or revealed religion, as light and heat to the Sun. If, therefore, they are to be rejected, the man is as safe in pagan darkness, as though he were called a christian; for he has as much *saving* knowledge of God without the bible as with it. We might as well exclude moral agency from natural religion, as "the deity and atonement of Christ" from revealed; for, as moral agency is essential to holiness and happiness, so are "the deity and atonement of Christ" to the salvation of a sinner. One cannot help wondering how authors, who appear to be far

* Dr. Toulmin's Letters to Mr. Fuller. p. 11.

from being destitute of common sense, can expect that such *partial* statements of christianity can possibly gain credit with the public! And yet, why wonder! Men naturally measure the public mind by their own; and the Lord suffers it to fulfil his word. The cross of Christ has always been a stumbling-block and rock of offence; and so it will remain till men become fools that they may be wise. If the Lord Jesus be only considered as a popular *Patriot*, or merely as a superior *Moralist*, and if men may be saved by their repentance and good works, *then is the offence of the cross ceased*. But, it should be remembered, that, with the cross of Christ are gone all the springs and motives of *the obedience of faith*, which *alone* is acceptable in the sight of God.

Revealed religion without "the *Trinity*" is perfectly unintelligible. By whatever evidence we arrive at the knowledge of God the Father, by the same we are taught the deity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The authority is one; whether it be external or internal: by external I mean the testimony of the divine *word*: and, by internal, I mean a sense of pardon in *experience*. The man who has tasted the Lord is gracious has such a conviction and persuasion of the true and real deity of the Son and Holy Spirit, that he must be deprived of his own consciousness before he can give up the truth. His stability may be called an enthusiastic fancy, or the cant of a party; but he knows it to be the effect of the Spirit's operation, and the fruit of the cross of Christ, flowing from the fulness of sovereign grace: and, therefore, he is neither afraid nor ashamed to acknowledge the truth to the glory of God. The most significant act of personal public worship to which the believer is called, is, *to put on Christ by baptism*. But, as this ordinance is a standing testimony to the doctrine of the *Trinity*; and, as the believer professes, in that solemn act of worship, his faith in this doctrine: hence it follows, that he who denies the doctrine can neither be proper subject nor administrator of the ordinance; because the ordinance, without the doctrine is void of meaning. [But I understand that Mr. Fuller has replied himself to Dr. T. or intends doing it.]

Here I return to my first intended subject "*The satisfaction of Christ*." I confess the term *satisfaction*, applied to the cross

of Christ, is not found in the scriptures; but, finding the doctrine there, I make no scruple to use the word. And when an author "*boasts*" of expressing himself "in the words of scripture," as Dr. *Toulmin* does, I may be permitted to call it a vain and empty "*boast*;" because if some words of scripture may be cited without comparing them with others, and without an explanation; what error might not be countenanced by such conduct? If merely repeating an unconnected part of God's word, is to establish what the author pleases; then farewell to all detection of error, and all support of truth, from the sacred page! because one person will produce scripture as well as another; and, if no comparison of passages, or explanation, be admitted, all may be right, however contradictory. Dr. *Toulmin* could not mean to maintain such a thought as this, because it would defeat his own design; for, if this be a proper mode of proceeding, all hypotheses, however opposite, have the same ground on which to rest, and the same authority for proving their truth. But, if scripture may be compared with scripture, or if other words may be used to convey our apprehension of its meaning, as the Dr. himself has done; then it necessarily follows that all such "*boasting*" is empty and vain; and therefore ought to be given up, *as such*, by all honest enquirers after the truth. My bible no where says that "Jehovah is *one person*"—or that the divine being is *one person*," but I read that baptism is to be administered *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. And Paul prayed that *the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost*, might be with the Corinthian Church. Whether baptism and prayer be not solemn acts of religious worship, every one can judge. But in each of these texts there are *three persons* evidently implied, and as possessing *one nature*, or they could not be *united* in the same act of religious worship. These passages are parts of the divine word, or they are not. If they be *not*, expunge them, for they cannot profit us. If they be, then God speaks the truth in them, or he does not. If he does *not*, reject them, for they may do us hurt. It signifies nothing to criticize upon them,

for they cannot be made to speak better sense than they do already; and, therefore, if they do *not* speak the truth, discard them at once: but if they *do*, then I have the advantage of the *Unitarian*. I have *his authority* for using an unscriptural expression, and I have the suffrage of the old and new testament to confirm my *sense* of it; while the *sense* of his expressions is manifestly contradicted by the testimony of God himself.

It is needful to observe here, to open our way,

1. That, though man was formed in the image of God, and furnished with moral ability for glorifying his Maker; yet, now he is a sinner: and, as a sinner, deserves at the hand of his lawgiver all that was meant in the sanction of the law. Let that penalty include whatever it may, the whole was deserved in consequence of sin. *The wages of sin is DEATH.* This is the voice of the old and new testament.

2. That, though *all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God; yet *some* are saved, with an everlasting salvation. The penalty is not inflicted on *all*. This truth is no less asserted in the sacred page than the other. They stand or fall together. If, therefore, it be allowed, that men have sinned, and yet that sinners are saved, then I assert,

3. That this could *not* be effected without *satisfaction* made by the Saviour. By *satisfaction* I mean, that Christ *did* and *suffered* all the law required in the stead of his people—and that this was *necessary* to their salvation and eternal glory.

With pleasure I confess that the salvation of any of Adam's race is the effect of the sovereign *good will* of God. Or, they are saved, as the scriptures testify, *according to the riches of his grace*. Here was no *necessity*, or previous obligation; for, as *all* have sinned, *all* deserved to die; and, had *all* perished with fallen angels, he had neither been unkind nor unjust in the punishment of one any more than the other. And, it is equally plain that the constitution and appointment of Christ to the office and work of the Mediator, was the fruit of his will and his wisdom; for, no part of human nature had a *right* of union to the Son of God, nor was the Son of God under any previous obligation to *take upon him the seed of Abraham*; but

the person of the Mediator and the work he had to perform, must all be resolved into the gracious design of the *divine will*—not so *satisfaction* to divine justice. This was *necessary*, *indispensably necessary*, because

1. The divine law, the law of nature, *must* be honored. There is no impropriety in saying the Most High *could not* institute a law, the holiness of whose nature, and the penalty of whose sanction, should be unworthy of himself. Its requisitions were equitable, and its penalty just. For this reason, the great Legislator could not but *necessarily* will the support of its authority. And, willing it, he could not, consistent with his nature and character, give up its defence. The obedience it enjoined was not performed; but, the penalty it threatened, was incurred. Had, therefore, any sinner been saved and the law not magnified, the divine Being had relinquished his character. As is the Law, such is the Lawgiver, naturally and necessarily holy, just and good; and he cannot will himself to be *but what he is*; and, consequently, he *must* will himself to be known to his creatures *as he is*: and hence follows, *necessarily*, punitive justice on sin committed, whether sinners are saved or not. Had any sinner been saved, and the law not duly honored, the great God must have renounced the truth of his word, and have changed his nature; for punishing justice is neither more nor less than a confirmation of his *truth*, and a transcript of his *holy nature*. I said he must *renounce* the truth of his word: Speaking to God, the prophet says, *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*. Moses also declares that *Jehovah, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God*. And the Lord himself says of sin, *oh do not this abominable thing that I hate*. And again, *for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord*. And before Moses he proclaimed his name to be, *The Lord God—that will by no means clear the guilty*. This evidence may suffice. And he must also have *changed his nature*. For, if he does not *necessarily* will to punish sin, he must not only will to connive at it, but even to justify it. There is no alternative. *He that justifieth the wicked, is an abomination to the Lord*; and, consequently, he cannot do it himself. It comes then to this, my friend, till some man shall come forward and prove, on divine authority, that God

does *not* necessarily hate and will to punish sin, I shall maintain that he does both; and that, therefore, no sinner can be saved at the expence of the divine law.

2. Satisfaction is likewise *necessary* for *the happiness of the sinner*. We see in our father Adam, and we feel in ourselves, that there is no freedom in the presence of God while guilt prevails in the bosom, and love to his character is far from the heart. There is no happiness in God without fellowship with him. There is no fellowship with him without reconciliation to him. There is no reconciliation to him without the knowledge of Christ the mediator between him and us. The mediator that has magnified the law and made it honorable—has obeyed its precepts and endured its penalty—that God may be *just*, as well as *gracious*, in saving the sinner. Jehovah says he is a *just* God, and a Saviour; but, till this is known to be truth, no man, that is convinced of his own state, and the divine character, can venture to stand before him in judgment. But the Son of God incarnate, is set forth on purpose to demonstrate the righteousness of God, in pardoning the sin, and justifying the person, of him that believeth in Jesus: and through faith in him, the man is reconciled to God and rejoices before him. Blessed be his name, *the word of reconciliation* is in our hands, and *the ministry of reconciliation* is with us; may the Spirit of all grace give us faith to receive it to the glory of God. Now then we consider

3. That the law is honored, and the sinner saved, by Jesus Christ, to the glory of God. This is the reigning doctrine of all the word of truth; and, contrary to which, there is not a sentence from first to last. Hence great Paul says, *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law*. By *faith* he evidently means the doctrine of faith, the satisfaction of Christ: and the notion, that this doctrine *makes void* the law, he treats with abhorrence. And when he says it is *established* by faith, he plainly teaches that its glory could not have been manifested, nor its authority supported, to the honour of the lawgiver, had not the Saviour died according to the scriptures. The pure nature of the law, the equity of its claims, the horrid nature of sin, and the justice of God in the damnation of sinners; had never been fully displayed to

the world, had it not been for the obedience and death of our glorious Immanuel. But here they shine with a splendor, that men indeed dislike, but God approves for ever. No man can feel more genuine philanthropy, or labor more for the good of men, than our apostle; and yet he said, "though *we*, or an *angel* from heaven, preach any *other gospel* unto you, than *that* which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed.*" This was deliberately spoken to the glory of God, and not from malevolence to the false apostles. But we need not be confined to the servant, the master teaches the same truth. In his sermon on the mount, he says, *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* And what man in the world can inform me how Christ fulfilled them, who denies his vicarious obedience and death? I said *vicarious*, because, if he acted not expressly in the name and stead, as well as in the nature of his church and people, their salvation could not be the effect of his cross, to which it is ascribed. Hence Paul says, *he was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.* Here, you see, he stood in their law-place, in order to redeem them according to law. For which reason we read that God *purchased* the church with his own blood; and that Christ gave his life a *ransom* for many.

Here let me premise—They were under the law in Adam their federal head. This is implied in Christ being made under the law for them; for, if they had not been thus considered, how could Adam have been the figure, or type of Christ? or why should the apostle make such a positive declaration concerning him? But, having sinned in Adam,

The *penalty* of the law was incurred; and, if ever they were saved, the *penalty must* be inflicted. Had it been inflicted on *them*, they could not have been saved; and, as it was settled before they sinned, that they should be saved, therefore the *penalty must* be necessarily inflicted on *another*. And that other should be one who professedly, and in truth, legally represented them; or, in the eye of the law, his sufferings could not be considered as theirs, or be placed to their account,

as their exemption from deserved punishment. Christ himself was not pardoned, for he suffered according to the full intent and meaning of the threatening : and, if he had not suffered in the esteem of the lawgiver, expressly as their representative, the blessing of pardon had no more been extended to *them*, than to *him*. For, what is pardon, but an exemption from suffering according to law ? But this punishment they never can endure, because they are forgiven all trespasses for his name sake. Hence you are informed by infallible truth, that he *redeemed them from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them*—that *God spared not his own son, but freely delivered him up for us all*—that *the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed*. In short, that even *when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son*. A portion this, of the divine word, as replete with glorious grace as it is with eternal truth. But, he could not suffer the penalty due to their sins, except their sins were charged to his account. On this also, the bible is not silent. Their sins were not imputed to *them*, because they were imputed to *him*. This was taught by the doctrine of sacrifices : for, without this, the whole of that service was an empty, vain parade ; affording no instruction to man, and of course not worthy of the divine appointment. When the holy spirit of wisdom and truth gives orders for that service, he speaks in the abstract of what our translation calls the *sin-offering*, the more strongly to impress our minds with the design and importance of that institution ; and the more fully to shew us that the substance of that shadow was only to be found in Christ. These are his words : And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, *This is the LAW of the sin* : In the place where the burnt-offering is killed, *shall the sin be killed before the Lord*. This is the language of the divine Institutor himself, and therefore expressive of his meaning ; the which we never do well to forget, because it is essential to the intention of the appointment. But, *why* was the sacrifice denominated *sin* ? For no other reason than because the *sin* of the person, for whom it was sacrificed, was *laid upon it*, at least by confession.

And, having the person's sin upon it, then it was killed and offered as a sacrifice to God, expressly in the name and stead of that person whose sin it bore, to make an atonement for him, that he might not die for that sin. Hereby he was taught that he deserved to die for that sin, and that he could not be exempted from the punishment, without the shedding of the blood of another for him; but that, by virtue of his sacrifice *dying in his stead*, he was forgiven. By this work the faith of the old testament saints was directed to Jesus Christ as *bearing* their sin, and *dying* in their stead, that they might live before God for ever. Hence they were told, in the time of their sacrifices, that *the Lord had laid*, or made to meet on him, *the iniquity of all his people*—that *his soul was made sin*—that *he bare the sin of many*—and that it was under this consideration, *and no other*, that he *was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities*. It was for this reason, *and not another*, that Jehovah *willed*, or was *pleased to bruise him, and put him to grief*. This was the *will*, or *pleasure* of God, concerning which the Saviour said, both by David and by Paul, *Lo! I come, to do thy will, O God!* And, in the garden he says, *The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it!* To illustrate and confirm the design of the ancient sacrifices to us also, the inspired Paul declares that he was *made sin* (A) for us, who knew no sin—that he *bare* our sins in his own body on the tree—and that he *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. On which ground the chief of sinners are saved to the glory of God. By this sketch of evidence, from the consistent testimony of scripture, it appears that our adorable Immanuel, in his own person, endured the *penalty* due to the sins of his people, for their redemption, forgiveness, and salvation. To look at the death of Christ, but not as having this design and effect, is to behold an event, the most wonderful in all the *empire* of God, for which no reason can be given; because, if the above scriptures, with others of similar import, afford not a just state of the nature and end of the fact, no better can be devised by the sons of men. Was Jesus a holy, innocent character, and *merely a man like ourselves*? Then he suffered *unjustly*, both from the Jews, the Romans, and from God; for, as he had not injured

them, so he had not offended *him*. But was he *only a man*? Did he not declare himself to be the Son of God, and that he was equal with the Father? Did he not in person, and by his disciples, proclaim forgiveness in his blood, and salvation by his cross? But, if his *true character* does not answer to this record, then he was an Impostor, and *ought* to have suffered as he did. The Jews did right in detecting and punishing him; because he not only professed to be Jehovah's special messenger, but that he was also the true God, and eternal life. Yet, it should be remembered, that if the Jews are to be justified for punishing *him*, the conduct of God cannot be justified for punishing *them*. And if the atonement of Christ is to be considered "as simply a *medium*, through which God has been "pleased to exercise mercy toward the penitent;" then his satisfaction must be given up, or explained away; which, nevertheless, is the glory of the sacred page. Once more, the law had not only a *penalty* to inflict in consequence of sin, but it likewise had a demand of

Perfect obedience; or a sinless righteousness. Though the law could honorably *forgive* the man when his surety had borne the penalty for him, yet it could not *justify* him without a complete obedience. This the man had not performed; and, therefore, if it were not performed for him, he could not have boldness in the lawgiver's presence; because he could not dispense with the demands of his law. *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness*. But pardon does not make a man righteous; nay, it proves he has sinned: and, consequently, he can have no acceptance with God, without a righteousness commensurate to his law. The man, in himself, is ungodly, and yet he is justified; for the God of glory *justifies the ungodly*. As, therefore, the man has not a righteousness of his own performing, he must have a righteousness wrought out by another: and, this righteousness must be legally his, or he cannot be accepted for its sake. The law must be obeyed expressly in his name and stead, or the obedience performed cannot stand to his account. Before the act of one can be considered legally as the act of another, so as for the end of the law to be answered by the said act when performed; there must be a legal relation or

union subsisting between them. It is only in this view, and on this principle, that we are said to be *crucified, and dead, with Christ*, on the one hand; and on the other, that we are *made the righteousness of God in him*. Hence *Christ*, by his obedience, *is the end of the law for righteousness*, to every one that believes. His righteousness is theirs, *for God has *imputed* it to them. This is the way in which he is *made righteousness unto them*; and through which they are *made righteous* by his obedience. *Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord*. In short, he is *the Lord our righteousness*. In the clear perception, and full persuasion of this truth for himself, Paul beheld his state when he said, And be found in Christ, *not having my own righteousness*, which is of the law, but *that* which is through the faith of Christ, *the righteousness which is of God by faith*. To bring in this *everlasting righteousness* was the *end*, or final cause of the Saviour's obedience to the moral law. This is the righteousness that is *revealed* in the old and the new testament—that is *brought near* to the man by the Spirit of Truth; and is the object of *his faith* for justification in the sight of God. The whole of which is attested, displayed, confirmed, by the *resurrection* of Christ from the dead; and hence the apostle expressly says, *he was raised again for our justification*. It is God that *justifieth*. It is Christ that died; *yea, rather, that is risen again*, who is even at the right hand of God. The resurrection of Christ was no part of his obedience, but the beginning of *the glory that was to follow*, and so was a *proof* that his obedience was complete; and his being seated at *the right hand of God*, is DEMONSTRATION that the satisfaction of his obedience and death is accepted in the heavens. Now this satisfaction was accepted of God, as perfect or imperfect, for the end of infinite wisdom. If *imperfect*, then it is *not true* that he has *redeemed* his people from the curse of the law, nor is he the *end* of the law for righteousness to them; and, if so, then the scripture is not true. If it was accepted as *perfect*, then the value and virtue of his obedience and death, did not only flow from the divine *will*, but necessarily arose from the dignity and glory of the *person* obeying and dying; and, consequently, his satisfaction

being *in itself*, infinitely adequate to the honor of God in the salvation of his people, it *could not fail* of acceptance with infinite holiness and truth: the *reality* of which is loudly proclaimed by his rising from the dead, and having a seat in the heavens for ever. Here *Divine Truth* shines, and will continue to shine, in all her native beauty, till the heavens be no more.

Detach this truth from the resurrection of Christ, and there is no more in it, by which the holy Spirit can quiet a guilty conscience, feed a believer's hope, or draw the heart to God, than in any other occurrence whatsoever. And, by whomsoever this truth is denied, it leaves the opposer open to the pointed address of the apostle—*Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish*. Whatever was truth, in the person and cross of Christ *then*, is so *still*; and, therefore, opposition to it *now*, is equally sinful and dangerous as it was *then*. In the opinion of some, the *Unitarian* and the *Deist* may *seemingly differ*; but, unless I mistake, they *radically agree*; seeing both deny the only ground of hope which the scriptures afford; and there is no other. *Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. No man can come unto the Father, but by him*. This is the testimony of eternal truth; and, therefore, when this is taken away, the *Deist* and the *Unitarian* are both on the same ground. They may have a hope of happiness, and who has not? But, when God rises up to judgment, except it be *good hope through grace*, they must perish for ever. Well does our Lord say, the *whole* need not a physician, but they that are *sick*; for it is no breach of charity to conclude, that if a man knew the plague of his own heart, nothing would satisfy his conscience and support his hope, in the view of death and judgment, but the satisfaction of Christ and an interest in his salvation. This letter is already longer than first intended, for which reason I close without increasing it by apology.

I am, &c.

P. S. See (A) p. 49. *Made sin*. 2. Cor. v. 21. Here our translators have omitted the term *offering*; and why they should place it in the old testament I know not. I have examined, for ought I know, all the places where *sin-offering* occurs, and find no word in the original for

offering, but uniformly *sin*. That the notion of a sacrifice is not complete until it is *offered*, is granted; but the mode of expression universally adopted by the Spirit of truth, seems necessarily to imply *the previous imputation of sin* before it can be offered as a sacrifice in any sense of the word. And that Christ is a *sin-offering* is true, but the thought of his being *previously made sin*, by having the sins of his people *laid* upon him, or *imputed* to him, is most generally forgotten; which yet is essentially necessary in order to have a just and scriptural understanding of the doctrine before us. And this doctrine well understood, as the Spirit of wisdom has left it in the sacred volume, will shew us the fallacy and danger, not of the *Unitarian* sentiment only, but of the *Arminian* likewise: for we are taught hereby that Christ was a *true* and *real* sacrifice for the sins of his people, and for *no more* of the human race than are *made the righteousness of God in him*.

LETTER VII.

DEAR SIR,

WHAT Isaiah calls the *sure mercies of David*, and what the Apostle means by *spiritual blessings*, I consider as *supernatural*; because they were given, and are manifested, to the subjects of them, under a consideration *above* the original state of the creature. Of which the creature, *as such*, had neither enjoyment nor knowledge. The wonderful plan of grace and of glory centred in Christ, as the head and the husband of his body the church. This is altogether the effect of the divine wisdom and will; and, when the astonishing design is fulfilled, it shall be wholly *to the praise of his glorious grace*. Here the Most High appears, not as the common Creator and Lord of man and his posterity, but as the sovereign dispenser of unmerited favors; and gives absolute certainty of their final possession, by vesting them all in the hand of his Son. Christ and his church have ever been one; nor can any change in the creature dissolve the relation. Adam and Eve continued their union, though not their obedience. The satisfaction of Christ in behalf of his people, and their felicity as flowing therefrom, proceed upon this principle. This is the truth, which the Spirit of grace gives the heirs of glory, as the source of their hope, the ground of their comfort, and the earnest of their inheritance.

The *Arminian* differs, in *profession*, from both the preceding characters; but, if his hope agree with the distinguishing article of his creed, he is as far from happiness as they. What I mean by his distinguishing sentiment is this—*That the Lord Jesus Christ obeyed and died for all the human race equally and alike—as truly for those who perish, as for those who are saved.* (A) Were not men more concerned for their *own*, than for the glory of *God*, who would defend such a thought as this! If it be allowed indeed that men save themselves, then this doctrine may be *true*; but, if God be the Saviour of sinners, then it must be *false*: and, a falsehood of deeper guilt and more accumulated aggravation, who can name? The *word*, the *character*, and the *band* of God, are all engaged to prove that salvation is, *not* the work of man, *but* of the Most High; the whole of which must either be trifled away, or openly denied, by the man who believes the Saviour died for those in *hell*. For, if the *general ransom* be admitted, it follows of course, as the *Unitarian* holds, that he made satisfaction for none. Here both characters meet in the end, though the ways which lead to it may apparently differ. Christ is not the salvation of any. But, before I proceed, permit me again to observe, That truth is self-consistent, and that one part of scripture never contradicts another. With this remark in mind you will see that the *general ransom* is contrary

1. To the *genuine sense* of scripture on the subject of salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ made satisfaction to the justice of God, or he did not. If he did *not*, then this *general* doctrine may be *true*, and all the passages produced in the preceding letter, together with the reasoning upon them, must be *false*; at least the passages themselves are evidently *misunderstood*. If he *did* satisfy divine justice by his obedience and death, then all for whom that satisfaction was made *must* be saved, and no more.

2. To some *parts* of the Saviour's *own* words. Before hand he informs us *how* he will address certain persons in that day. Then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you*: depart from me ye that work iniquity. *I know you not whence you are.* *I know my sheep*, and will say unto them, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. What is said here, respecting *knowledge*; cannot be meant of the perfection of omniscience; because, in

this sense, he equally *knows* one as another; but must be understood of *special* knowledge, arising from sovereign pleasure. Those who perish were *never known* by Christ, as members of his body and as redeemed by his blood; for, had they ever stood in the relation to him of sheep to a shepherd, or a wife to an husband, he could not in truth have said *I never knew you*; and, not knowing them, it is not only safe, but necessary to conclude, that he *never laid down his life* for them. *I pray for them*: I pray *not* for the *world*, but for them which *thou hast given me*, for *they are thine*. *For their sakes I sanctify myself*. This is spoken by the God of Truth in human nature, in the immediate exercise of his office as the high-priest of his people; and by this he shews us that his atoning sacrifice and his intercession were only for those who were *given him*. Aaron never interceded but for those whose atonement he made, because the atonement was the ground of his plea. The intercession is founded, in each, on the sacrifice offered. The sacrifice being acceptable the prayer must prevail. And Jesus says to his Father, *I know that thou hearest me always*. Had he therefore ever prayed for those in hell, they must have been delivered; or, rather, they had never been there. Hence it follows, that he never died for that description of men, *the world*, because for them he never prayed. If the contrary be *true*, who can prevent the Saviour's words from being *false*? Are not his advocacy and his propitiation of co-equal extent and efficacy?

3. To the standing, descriptive character of God incarnate, the SAVIOUR. On the *reality* of this character rests the whole truth of revealed religion. If this be *not* a real character, that is, if God manifest in the flesh, be *not* the SAVIOUR, then the *Deist* is to be justified in rejecting a book which so uniformly ascribes salvation to him, and expressly says, *neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*. But, if he be the SAVIOUR, then both the *Unitarian* and the *Arminian* have opposed the truth to the dishonor of God. The *one* denies the atonement of Christ altogether, and the *other* holds it to be so *extensive* as to be effectual for none, and therefore useless. On

this ground of reasoning it appears that each character is estranged from the truth of God in his word. If Christ be the SAVIOUR, then some of the human race must have been saved *by him*, and by him *alone*, without the assistance of their *own* doings; but, if no person was ever thus saved by him, then he is *not* the SAVIOUR. To call him Saviour, *because* of the doctrine he preached, and *because* he died and rose again simply to confirm his own testimony—or, to say his atonement was merely available to put it in the power of men to *save themselves*; is only to mock him with a title, and then insult him for wearing it. If any thing in man, or done by him, *co-operates* with the cross of Christ in saving him; then, that thing, be it what it may, is of more value in the sight of God than the obedience and death of his Son; because, without it, the man *could not* be saved. But, can any man that fears God, suppose that his faith, repentance, love or obedience, add *efficiency* to the satisfaction of Christ! or, that his repentance and good works are sufficient to save him *without* the satisfaction of Christ! And yet, however replete the thought may be with unbelief, with pride and self-importance, there is no possible alternative, if the Son of God be not the *only* Saviour of sinners! It is awful arrogance indeed to set up our performances either as co-adjutors or substitutes with Christ in the work of salvation; and must eventually leave the man without excuse in the presence of that God, whose frown is death, and whose judgment is truth. To such a man he says, I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works, *for they shall not profit thee*. But we know the name *Jesus* was given him emphatically and *exclusively* as the SAVIOUR of his people, *from their sins*. This is the genuine and descriptive import of his Name; and if any of Adam's posterity are already entered into rest, he does not wear the name in vain. *Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. I will save them by the Lord their God. That they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood—to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. And they sung a new song, saying, thou wast slain,*

and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. Had he not saved them from their sins, he had not saved them at all; but, being washed in his blood and redeemed to God, they are before the throne, and celebrate *his* praise in eternal glory. If this be the language of Divine Truth, then some of the fallen sons of men are saved by the Lord their God in human nature; and consequently exalt his love in their never ending song. *HE was their Saviour*, and his name *alone* receives the praise. But this cannot be the song of the *Unitarian*, who *denies* his atonement; nor can it be sung by the *Arminian*, who *asserts* his atonement to be as truly made for those in hell as for those in heaven; because, in that case, those in heaven must attribute their salvation to something else, and not to the blood of the Lamb. For, if he died alike for both, the one can be no more indebted to him than the other; nor can he, for that reason, *deserve* the character of the Saviour of either.

4. To the *relative characters* of the saved. That there are peculiar relative characters found in the word of truth, must be obvious to the most inattentive reader; and they must either have a distinguished exclusive meaning, or no meaning at all. If they have *no meaning*, then a great part of the bible is useless. If they have *any meaning*, it must be to certify us, that the *relative state* of those people towards God, is as discriminating as their *relative characters*: and, if so, then the Saviour yielded not his life for all alike. What is universal and promiscuous needs no particular expressions to confirm or describe it; but where such peculiar language is used, by the Spirit of Truth, an exception must doubtless be intended. In the scriptures we have the subsequent language. *His, my, thy people. His feed; his and my sheep. The elect; the children of God. Heirs of God, and heirs of salvation, to which they were chosen; and heirs of glory. Believers, and such as believe to the salvation of the soul. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. The body, the spouse of Christ, of which he is the head, the husband, and the Saviour. The people of God; a peculiar people; the Lord's portion is his people—his inheritance—And, Israel my glory.* These expressions are appropriate to one and the same number of persons without the possibility of variation;

whose cause the Son of God espoused, whose redemption he obtained, and whose final glory is secure in his hands. For them, as a *forerunner*, he is entered within the vail; and, *because* he lives, they *shall* live also. These descriptive characters, however frequently used by the inspired writers, are both deceiving and absurd, if Christ gave himself a ransom for those who *perish*, as he did for those who are *saved*. The terms *All*, *World*, and such like, when used of the death of Christ in relation to the redeemed, will easily comport with these descriptive characters, but not vice versa; because both sides of a contradiction cannot be true. And the expressions *whosoever*, *whosoever will*, and such as are similar, are inserted wisely and graciously. *Wisely*; because the unbelieving opposer is left *without excuse*. *Graciously*; because hereby the sensible, perishing sinner is *encouraged* to receive the word, and trust in the name, of the Lord his God.

5. To the divine *prerogative* and *perfections*. In contemplating the glorious God, the first thought that strikes a modest mind is this—That he possesses an independent, indisputable *right* to dispose of his creatures as seemeth good in his sight. An earthly potter *claims*, and without control *exerts*, a similar prerogative over his clay. This supreme *prerogative* the Most High has ever exercised, without *injury*, without *unrighteousness*, towards angels and men. Some angels were chosen, and are holy still. Some sinned, and are lost for ever. From Abel to the present hour, he separates the vessels of mercy to know his name, and to rejoice in his salvation. And what creature would impeach his conduct, or say to him, *What dost thou?* *He that reproveth God, let him answer it.* Some of the human race were *predestinated* to the adoption of children—to be conformed to the image of his Son—to be called—to be justified, and glorified. They were *appointed* to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ; and have a kingdom appointed to them by *Covenant*; for they have an everlasting covenant made with them, ordered in all things and sure; of which covenant Christ is the *Messenger* and the *Mediator*, and his blood is the ratification of it to the glory of God. And not only so, but according to this *determinate counsel and foreknowledge*; even Christ himself was delivered into wicked hands to be crucified

and slain, when he died a sacrifice for the sins of his people.

The Lord *knoweth* them that are his. The Lord *knew*, both from the mutability of the creature, and from his own design, that man would sin and many of his posterity perish; and, would he give his Son for those whom he *knew* would never hear of him, nor be saved by him? To what purpose? What *wisdom* to pay a ransom for those it was certain would die in slavery? What appearance of *truth* is there, in promising the Saviour that he should see his seed, and that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand, when numberless sinners perish for ever? What *justice* to Christ, or to sinners, to punish their transgressions both in *him* and in *them*? How could the *Father* express his *love* to Christ, in putting his soul to grief for those who bare their own sin? Or, how could Christ profess he *loved* such as die in sin, by giving his life for them, when he suffered them to perish? Those who hold the *general ransom* should seriously attend to these important queries, for the honor of God is very deeply concerned in them! Better for all the men upon earth to confess their error, than dishonor the character of God.

6. To the *design* and *work* of the Holy Spirit. All the work of God is the effect of previous purpose; and so is his not working. If the Lord of glory died for every child of Adam, why is not the gospel of salvation heard and received by every one? Why so many left *without* it; and why so many suffered to *oppose* it? How can they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach except they be sent? not of men, but of God the Spirit. He must send and succeed the gospel, or Christ will never be known to salvation. May his blessing eminently rest on the present social attempts for diffusing the knowledge of his word! *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* If the atonement of Christ was meant for all mankind, it seems more than strange in the divine conduct that he should withhold the bible from so great a part of the habitable globe! And stranger still, that he does not make it his power to salvation, to every one that reads or hears it!

So strange, that no reason can be rendered for it, that is worthy of God. For, were it his pleasure to *send* it to every clime, who could prevent? Is not *his will* done in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth? Can any stay *his hand*? Shall *his word* return to him *void*, and *not* accomplish *his* pleasure, or *not* prosper in the thing whereto *he sent it*? And, if he meant to *save* every one of mankind, who was to *defeat* his purpose? *I will work, and who shall let it*? is Jehovah's language; and who will venture to dispute its truth? When Paul therefore says, *who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*; we must understand him *distributively*, and not *individually*; because, *this* is contrary to scripture and to fact, but *that* is confirmed by both: seeing men of *all civil* descriptions have been effectually taught the truth, and have been saved with an eternal salvation. It is the gracious work of the adorable spirit to *glorify Christ* in the bosom of every redeemed sinner; and, if the Saviour died alike intentionally for all, it would be *unjust* to make a difference in any; for all the benefits of his cross *ought* to be imparted to all those for whom he obeyed and died. Are faith and repentance, hope and love, the fruits of his death? Then they are the unalienable *right* of all mankind, if he gave himself a ransom for all; and Jehovah's conduct cannot be justified in withholding them. Christ is precious to them that *believe*, and faith is the *gift* and *operation* of God, in consequence of election—it is the fruit, not of the law of nature, but of the covenant of grace. Repentance and forgiveness are granted by an ascended Saviour; and *wisdom* is justified of *all her children*.

In gracious *experience* Paul shall speak for all the family; for all are of one mind. *Who maketh thee to differ from another? What hast thou that thou didst not receive? By the grace of God I am what I am.* He glorified the *Father* for revealing his Son in him. He magnified the *Son* for *loving* and *giving himself* for him. And he praised the *Holy Spirit*, as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ—Attributing the *difference* he felt, and the hopes he entertained, to the *grace* of God. But, according to the *Arminian*, such language can

have no meaning ; it must be a deception ; because, if Christ loved and died for all alike, then Paul was no more indebted to him than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, who now *suffer the vengeance of eternal fire*. If the *general ransom* be true, then the difference between one sinner and another, both here and hereafter, must be *entirely of himself* ; seeing the cross of Christ, on this supposition, both in the will of God and in fact, extends to all alike : that is, it is *the meritorious cause of salvation to none*. Has any sinner a *new heart* ? He must *work* it, or *produce* it *himself*. Is any sinner *pardoned* and *justified* ? He must *deserve* it *himself*. Is any man in *glory* at last ? It must be the *reward of his own goodness and obedience*. And, if so, then indeed *the cross of Christ is become of none effect*, and I might as well believe with the *Unitarian* and the *Deist* as with the *Arminian* ; for all agree to set at nought the sacrifice of the Son of God, and venture into the presence of their final Judge, relying on their own intentions and doings for acceptance in his sight. A demonstration this, that they are *not taught of God* : for, had they *heard* and *learnt* of him, and were God *their Father*, they would have *loved* Jesus Christ, and *come to him* for pardon and peace, for righteousness and life, and for all the blessings of grace and salvation. They would have read, and they would have believed, the infallible testimony so often repeated. *That by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight*. Here you see, that while there is *divine truth* in the word of God—while the great Jehovah exercises his sovereign prerogative, and regards the display of his perfections—and while the operations of the Holy Spirit are known to be facts in the bosoms of men ; the characters before us, *as such*, can have no ground for their hope, that will stand them in stead, in the day of the Lord. The self-adulation of man, and the deceit of the human heart, cannot be conceived ! Men will believe themselves ; they will believe the father of lies ; but will not believe the fountain of truth ! All opposition to him arises from disbelief of the divine character, as given in the sacred page—and hence men will not receive his testimony, till they see him come in the clouds of heaven. And then he will say, *Bring hither mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me*.

The gospel has always been esteemed *glad tidings*, because it reveals a free and full salvation for the chief of sinners. It shews us that there is more efficacy in the blood of Christ to pardon and cleanse, than there is malignity or demerit in sin to condemn; or none could be saved. This gracious truth has healed a wounded conscience, cheered a disconsolate mind, and made terrific death a welcome friend, for thousands of thousands. But, after all, if the bible be not of God; if the satisfaction of Christ be not a revealed truth; or, if he shed his blood for those in hell; then, the whole is a dream—a delusion. The burdened sinner is *discouraged*; for there is no hope. The joyful saint is *deceived*; for it is all a fiction. But, my friend has not *so learned Christ*. No, nor any other, who *have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus*.

I am, &c.

P. S. (A) p. 54. Since this was written, I have seen *The general Baptist Association Letter* for 1796; where this *general doctrine* is professedly taught. There is one thought in it, on which the whole seems to rest; but a thought more fallacious and dangerous is seldom found: I mean that of *inferential reasoning*. To deny the validity of reasoning from "*inference*," as Mr. Taylor is willing to do, p. 7. 8, is, at once, to give up the bible itself: for, where is the man to whom any part of it was *first* revealed? *How* comes the rational understanding to receive it as the word of God? By "*inference*," from the evidence of its divine original. *How* is the gracious man satisfied that it is from Heaven? By "*inference*," from its effect in experience. To "*vindicate a doctrine by inference*" therefore, is so far from being unfair or unjust, that it is, in fact, the most convincing, and the most satisfactory mode of reasoning on this subject, which can be adopted. You can apply it in various cases, for Mr. T. but this one may suffice for the present. Were Mr. T. aware of the evil but necessary consequences of his position, he would renounce it with abhorrence, and name it no more for ever. It is said, p. 12, that "circumstances ought to be very striking, and inferences very strong and obvious, to justify" *particular redemption*. They are so "strong and striking," that no man can either harmonize the scriptures—defend the divine character and perfections—or vindicate the conduct of God to men; by whom the contrary is received. But of this you will judge for yourself, by the thoughts which are now before you. The whole compass of the subject should be carefully considered; its importance duly regarded, and its consequences seriously

weighed, with a single eye to the divine glory, before we assert that God gave his Son to die for the sins of those who perish. Of what avail is it to please ourselves at the expence of *Divine Truth* !

A certain person, when speaking of Christ, says, " I have no more "doubt of his tasting death for every child of Adam, than I have of "my own existence." And yet, concerning the Deist, he has these words, " I demand, how shall he know whether he is an heir of glory, "or a lost sinner ?" See *Armin. Magaz.* Feb. 1797, p. 53. 59. This "demand" is easily answered ; because the Deist has nothing to do, but to prove himself a " child of Adam : " for all those for whom Christ tasted death, or endured the curse of the law, have the sting of death taken away, and can never come into condemnation, but *must* be safely conducted to glory. And it is to be observed, that such persons are " heirs of glory," because none but the sons of God are brought by the captain of their salvation, to eternal blessedness. Heb. ii. 10. Sometimes we "doubt" least, where we have the greatest reason for further enquiry ; and our confident assurance only betrays our weakness. Perhaps this writer may not see the truth of this observation ; because his "existence" cannot be made plainer than it is ; but, that Christ "tasted death for every child of Adam," is not only not quite so evident, but it has every argument founded on the glory of God, ready to oppose and refute the assertion. Dr. Owen says, " To affirm that Christ died "for all men, is the readiest way to prove he died for no man, in the "sense christians have hitherto believed, and to hurry poor souls into "the bottom of Socinian blasphemies." See his *Death of Christ*, p. 166.

LETTER VIII.

DEAR SIR,

HOWEVER excellent and blessed the life of innocence might be, yet a believer's life in Christ, is more exalted and glorious. *That* was derived from the God of his being, and belonged to his nature as a holy creature : *This* proceeds from a covenant Father, and is the fruit and effect of sovereign favor. Adam's nescience of it was neither his pain nor his crime. As he knew not its happiness, so neither was he obliged to exercise its graces. This life was provided for the family, and secured in

the hands of Christ, before Adam had a being; though not independent of his existence. Hence they were blessed, with all spiritual blessings in Christ, *before* the foundation of the world. And in time they are saved, and called with an holy calling, *not* according to their works, but according to *his own purpose and grace*, which was given them in Christ Jesus, *before* the world began. By this divine testimony I learn, that the life of the believer in Christ, differs from that of Adam, in its original and end, as well as its subjects. His was the life of the man, as such, and was common to his *nature*: this is peculiar to *children by adoption*, and designed for the praise of glorious grace. This being the case, supposing Adam had never sinned, I see no reason to conclude, that either himself or his posterity, would ever have enjoyed the believer's life in Christ. As the *body* of innocent Adam was not spiritual, like the raised bodies of the saints, so his *soul* had neither such views nor enjoyment of God as the believer has, either on earth or in heaven. By this you perceive that, when Adam fell, he did not forfeit the love of God *in Christ*, for he knew it not; he did not lose communion with the God of *grace*, because he had not enjoyed it: and, therefore it follows, by a very obvious inference, that the law of nature can exercise no authority, either by precept or penalty, with respect to the covenant of grace. Nor was he, by transgression, deprived of his rational powers; for still he is an intelligent being, and voluntary agent. In the choice of iniquity, he fell from his uprightness, and became an apostate; renounced his Maker, and set up Self for his *All*; lost fellowship with God, and sought happiness in the creature. Original righteousness fled, and depravity in all its powers prevailed. Instead of love to God, enmity; and for subjection, rebellion; obtained in the mind. Here you read his crime, and his ruin.

Nevertheless, however alienated from the life of God, the mind of man may be, through the ignorance that is in him; yet his conscience *must* bear witness to the moral government of God; he *cannot* elude the power of its evidence. His guilty fears attest his being a moral agent; and his various devices to

quiet them, shew his ignorance of God, and enmity against him. If "the *Spirit of Christ* was in every man," or if the great God bestowed "his *grace* on every man;" (A) then, according to the truth of scripture, and the design of God, *every man* would love *Christ*, and *every man* must be saved. But we see not this come to pass; and, therefore, though these expressions may confirm my observation respecting *natural conscience*, yet they are not *divine truth*; for every truth of God in his *word*, is eventually fulfilled by his *band*. Though the *Arminian* may adopt different expressions from the *Unitarian* and the *Deist*, yet, *if his creed and experience agree*, he no more depends on the blood and obedience of *Christ* for salvation than they; seeing *all* expect the favor of God for their own performances. And this is a *proof* that they look to Adam's covenant for happiness, and in reality reject the covenant of grace. This conduct is the genuine offspring of *unbelief* and *natural conscience* united. The man naturally fears misery, desires exemption from it, and flatters himself that, by doing what he chooses, he shall obtain his end; but not in God's way, nor to the honor of his grace. Though these *three* characters may differ in name, between themselves, and may seem to take a different road; yet they all unite in opposing, not merely the glorious *gospel*, but likewise the grand design of God in his *law*. They are truly *Antinomians*. For, if they ever enjoy the smiles of a holy and righteous God, by virtue of their own doings, in whole, or in part, not only the glory of the divine law-giver, *may*, but *must* sink into utter contempt and oblivion. But, *let God be true, and every man a liar*. I use the term *Antinomian* here for this only reason; because it is demonstrable, that those who expect eternal happiness from a righteous God, and yet deny, or explain away the satisfaction of *Christ*, discover no regard to the honour of the divine law. And, as though they partly perceived the odium of the name, they freely bestow it on those to whom it can never belong; for the proper defenders of divine satisfaction, are the only friends of the divine law, on the face of the earth. I said *proper defenders*, because those who profess to receive the *gospel*, and yet deny

the obligations of the believer to regard the *law*, as a rule of moral conduct, appear to me to oppose the truth. It is said, that Christ has *suffered* the penalty of the law, in the room and stead of his people—that he has *obeyed* its precepts to their justification—and this is *truth*, as above observed; truth in which alone I can rest and rejoice—the people of God are freed from the law, in its federal form, *by the body of Christ*: but, from thence to infer, “That a believer has *nothing* to do with the law,” whether the sentiment be reduced to practice or not, I consider as *opposing*, and not *defending*, the truth of God. I do not say the law of nature is the rule of a believer’s life of faith on the Son of God the Saviour, because it neither reveals the object of his faith, nor affords him strength to exercise it; but I receive it as the rule of his moral deportment as the creature of God, which relation is not dissolved by his being a believer in Christ. You see a manifest difference between the law gendering bondage as a covenant of works, and directing our conduct in the hand of Christ to his own glory. I am now speaking of it in the *last* sense, and not the *first*.

Here observe, that the gospel is *not* a rule of obedience: if it were, it must enjoin perfect and sinless obedience, or the contrary. That the holy and blessed God should command *imperfect* obedience, is a thought too absurd for any man that fears God to maintain: and, if the *same* obedience be enjoined by the gospel as by the law, then *law* and *gospel* are in vain distinguished, seeing both are of similar import. If men are “*condemned by the gospel*,” then it must be a law itself. And, if so, *how* are men to *hear* and *know* the salvation of God! *How* can it be *glad tidings*! *How* can the wounded be healed, and the perishing saved! *Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter*! Can the gospel be a joyful sound, and the voice of condemnation too? I trow not. This is confounding things that differ. The *gospel dispensation* no more precludes the alarming thunders of the law, than what is called the *legal dispensation* excluded the experimental knowledge of the gospel; for both have existed together, in their distinct intentions and operations, ever since the introduction of sin; and will continue to do so till the end of time. I think *Witsius*

is to be justified in saying, "That the promises of grace should "be referred to the *gospel*, but all injunctions of duty, and all "threatenings against transgressions, to the *law*." The truth is, the *gospel* is a full and glorious revelation of the grace and salvation of God to *sinners*, while the *law* is the only rule of obedience to his *creatures*. And though the *children* of God are delivered from it, as a covenant of works, yet they are still to regard it, as a rule of moral action, considered as *creatures*: both because it is a rule of obedience independent of its federal constitution; and because, they do not cease to be *creatures* by being *children*. The adorable *Creator* neither relinquishes nor eclipses his native beauties and glories: nor is he the less deserving their supreme affection and delight for his own sake; on account of his being their *Father* in Christ Jesus. The reverse of all this is the truth. And is any man less a believer's *neighbour*, because he may not be a partaker of the same grace with himself? Is he not to be *loved* and his welfare *sought*, because he is still in a state of nature? And, is not the moral law, the sole standard of all morality? If *not*, what is? But, if it *be*, then giving up the law, in this view, is renouncing all morality. It is an old, true saying, "There may be morality, without christianity; but there is no christianity without "morality." If a believer in Christ "has *nothing* to do with the law," then

He is raised *above* the capacity of sinning; for, *where there is no law, there is no transgression*. Sin is said to be *ανομία*. "Any "want of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God." That law of which I am now speaking. If, therefore, a gracious man, by virtue of being such, be raised above its cognizance, he cannot, for that reason, be the subject of sin or disobedience. All his thoughts, words, and actions, *must* be acceptable in the sight of God. Some of them, indeed, may prove disagreeable to society, in various respects, both as to person and property; but they cannot be *moral evils*; because the law, the *only* rule of moral conduct, does not, by the supposition before us, extend to the believer; and, therefore,

cannot affect his moral character. The fact is, he can have no moral character to be affected; for, if the rule be superseded, the character supposed to be measured by it, must cease with it. So that while he is in a state of nature, he has a moral character; but when he is called by the grace of God, he has none. This is the natural and necessary consequence of the believer's exemption from regarding the law as a rule of action. David was a man after God's own heart; and yet, in the matter of Uriah, his conduct not merely affected the good of society, but made the enemies of God to *blaspheme*. Both according to Nathan's message, and his own confession, it was manifestly *sinful* in the sight of God. And which, for that reason, is a full proof that the believer is *not* delivered from the law, as a rule of moral character; for, if it extend to *one* part of his character, it does to the *whole*; and, if not to the *whole*, then of course to *none*. And Paul exhorts believers so to conduct themselves as that the name of God, and his doctrine, be not *blasphemed*; which would have been quite superfluous and unmeaning, had the law taken no cognizance of their deportment. On this subject the Spirit of truth is not silent to his disciples.

Of Individuals—*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.* In natural and civil

Society—Parents and children; masters and servants; are directed to regard their *moral* obligations to each other. And, at large—*All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.* The design of which is, that we may *adorn* the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. In *church*

relation—*If any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no, not to eat.* And in *gracious experience*—*There is not a just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not.* Not at first conversion only, but in after life also, *by the law is the knowledge of sin.* Great Paul says of himself, *when I would do good, evil is present with me.* And John too, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth*

is not in us. With which agrees the experience of every gracious man in the world; and to whom, for this reason, a righteous advocate before the throne, is a daily unspeakable blessing. The apostle observes, not to *encourage* sin, but to *relieve* the mind that is burthened with it, *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Now the person that has no sin, can neither need nor prize, in daily experience, the advocacy of Christ—but that person can have *no* sin, who is exempted from all the cognizance of the law—and, therefore, if a believer “has *nothing* to do with the law,” then he has no need of the advocacy of Christ. Where there is no wound, *how* can there be healing? Where there is no sense of guilt, *what* need of the fresh discovery of pardon? But, how contrary is such a thought, to the word of truth; and to the universal experience of God’s people? The grace of God, that bringeth salvation to the sinner, *teacheth him to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.* What shall we call *ungodliness* and *worldly lusts*, but *violations* of the holy law of God? And, therefore, the grace of God, which appears in his salvation, teaches the believer to avoid them; and, at the same time, holds up motives, and affords him strength, for the opposite conduct, that the name of God may be glorified. Mr. Brine says, “Holiness, in general, is a submission to God’s authority in the *Law*; or, an approbation of the *commanding* will of God. And this necessarily supposes a subjection to his authority in every branch of *duty*. Grace only *qualifies* a person for performing holy, acceptable, and *evangelical* obedience. The matter of *this* obedience is indeed contained in the law, if not *formally*, yet *radically*; but the *motives* to it, and the *ends* of it, are such as the law is unacquainted with, and gives us no directions about.” See his Var. Sub. p. 41, 43, Edit. 2d. The obligations of a creature, to love and glorify God, are so far from being done away by divine grace given him, that they are more abundantly increased and confirmed by such a distinguishing favor conferred upon him. And, being constrained by the love of Christ, the truly gracious man sincerely desires to walk worthy of God, who has called him to his kingdom and glory. If the bible be a con-

sistent book, according to my ruling maxim, then it follows that, though Christ has satisfied all the claims of the law for his people, *as a covenant of works*, yet he has left it for them as *a rule of moral deportment*. He is *not the minister of sin*: which would be the fact, had he rendered them *lawless* towards God. (B)

You may call this a digression, if you please: only permit me to repeat my foregoing declaration. The *proper defenders* of divine satisfaction are the only friends of the divine law on the face of the earth. When the Most High instituted his law, the law of nature, he designed to have it fulfilled to perfection; which yet never *was*, and never *can* be performed, but by our glorious Immanuel. He *magnified* it, and made it *honorable*: that is, by his sinless obedience and atoning death, being God manifest in the flesh, he shed such a lustre and beauty upon it, and gave such testimony to its essential purity and truth, to the eternal glory of the Lawgiver, as could not possibly have resulted from the unflinching obedience of angels and men for ever. I see a grand and beautiful whole, worthy of the divine character, in that scheme which comprizes, in the most delightful harmony, all the excellencies of his moral government, and the fullest displays of his sovereign grace. His government is in no measure superseded by the bequests of his gracious favor; for grace always gives him the honor of being both a *just* God, and yet a *Saviour*. This magnificent object; this wonderful design of the divine wisdom and will; I would were beheld by those around, to the glory of God. The result of the eternal counsel, and the invariable operations of omnipotence to accomplish it, cannot be considered with impunity, as "*empty speculation*." That which has ever employed the thought of God as his *ultimate end*, must surely *deserve* the best affections of his intelligent creatures: and, as this admirable theme employs and fills the song of the blessed, some gracious knowledge of it is *necessary* for us, if ever we join them. Yea, it is *desirable* to have the mind enlarged with a view of its reality and importance day by day; that we may not, on the one hand, be children in understanding; and that we may, on the other, be growing up into him who is head over all things to his church. I conclude for

myself, from the evidence adduced, either that the whole plan of infinite wisdom must fail, and his nature be changed ; or the man must eternally perish who rejects the cross of Christ for salvation, and trusts his own performance and goodness for happiness at last. Must not that man have awfully proud conceptions of his own importance and worth, and miserably mean apprehensions of the Most High, who can suppose his doings *deserve* any favor from the everlasting God ! The greatest mere man that ever lived, the Apostle Paul, after a life the most indefatigable in the work of God, and the most extensively useful, freely uttered, from the fulness of his heart, this confession, I AM NOTHING ! let us each repeat it, to the glory of sovereign grace, *I am nothing*.

In this compendious manner I have endeavoured to epitomize a large and copious subject, *Divine Truth*. If any part shall need enlargement or illustration, in your opinion, your request will be a command that shall be cheerfully regarded, as the Lord shall favor me with ability and opportunity. In the mean time I remain

Dear Sir,

CHARD, April, 1797.

Yours,

S. ROWLES.

P. S. (A) p. 65. "The Spirit of Christ in every man."—"The grace of God bestowed on every man." Though these expressions bear a verbal difference, and proceed from different denominations of professed christians ; yet they terminate in the same principle. A principle utterly subversive of the word of truth, and directly annuls the satisfaction of Christ, and the work of the Spirit. *All men have not faith. Ye must be born again.* Can a man have the *grace of God*, and yet not have *faith*, nor be *born again* ? Impossible. All men, therefore, have not the grace of God. And Paul says, *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Would this assertion be worthy of an inspired writer, would it be even plain sense, if every man had the Spirit of Christ ? It would not. *Yea, ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of Christ dwell in you.* Here are two contrasted characters ; the one *has* the Spirit of Christ, the other *has not* ; and therefore it follows, either that the apostle knew not what he said, or

that every man has *not* the Spirit of Christ. Of course it is in vain to exhort the carnal mind to *improve* the grace of God, and to *follow* the Spirit of Christ in him, for the whole proceeds on a deceived, self-righteous disposition; and consequently, unless he be brought to *know the grace of God in truth*, he cannot stand before him in judgment. When a sinner is regenerated by the holy Spirit, he is not grafted on the old stock, nor is fallen "human nature amended;" but he is quickened *together with Christ*, by virtue of previous union to him. A life is implanted in him which was not only unknown before to *himself*, but which even his innocent father *Adam* never knew; namely, *a life of faith on the Son of God*, who is the ground of his acceptance with God, and his salvation for ever. A life which has all its supply and support from the fulness of Christ, to the glory of God. Hence it is called a *new creation*. When this change takes place the grace of God is *known* by the man, the Spirit of Christ *is in him*; but, *not till then*. The only wish of natural conscience is exemption from guilty-fears; for the glory of God makes no part of his concern. Could he but be persuaded of final safety, he would sin without control. *Fear* of punishment, and *hope* of gaining the divine favor, make up the whole of his religion: which is an evident proof that he never knew "the grace of God," and that he has not "the spirit of Christ."

(E) p. 70. "The law, from the moment of closing with Christ, "stands as the great *rule* of our practical walk and conversation: seeing "a true believer is not without law, (*ἀνομία* a lawless person.) to God: "but is *ἐννομία*, within the bond of the law to Christ: not exempted "from its *control*, as the standard of moral action; though delivered "from its power and execration, as a covenant of works." *Toplady's* Sermon, entitled Caveat, &c. p. 12. 47. Ed. 1770. "I speak not against "the doing any righteousness according to the will of God revealed; "let that mouth be for ever stopped, that shall be opened to blame the "law that is holy, just and good; or shall be a means to discourage "people from walking in the commandments of God blameless. The "rules and precepts of the law are very subservient unto Christ, as they "adorn the life with a conversation befitting a companion of Christ, "who calls us not unto uncleanness, but to holiness. Now had we "not directions from the law, men would live as they list; christians "would be rather monsters than men; the law, in the rules of it, being "holy and good, maintain a port befitting our communion with Christ." *Crisp's* Sermon. vol. i. p. 232. vol. ii. p. 628. 630. Ed. 1791. "To "deny that the law is a rule of conduct to christians, is an heretical prin-

" ciple. This is the heresy of the Antinomians and Libertines. In order
 " to prevent an abuse of gospel doctrines, it is a duty incumbent on the
 " minister to shew, that these doctrines of divine grace do not lessen,
 " much less dissolve, our obligation to obedience: and, consequently,
 " one necessary branch of his work is, to treat on *practicals*, and to
 " shew that the gospel has no greater *adversaries* than those are, who,
 " under a pretence of value for its momentous doctrines, and of plea-
 " sure in hearing them preached, cannot bear with exhortations to
 " practice duty. Those are some of the *worst enemies of the cross of*
 " *Christ*, and justly deserve *the most severe reproof*, let them be *who* or
 " *what* they may. Doctrines are not to be neglected or curtailed under
 " the *specious* pretence of promoting *practical* religion: nor must we
 " decline to treat of duties, and our obligation to obedience, under a
 " *like* pretence of esteem for the doctrines of the grace of God. Though
 " *the gospel delivers us from the covenant of works, it leaves us under it*
 " *as a law.*" *Brine* against Foster p. 76. And his ordination charge to
 the late Mr. Ryland, p. 32. note. " Doctrinal Antinomianism, properly
 " speaking, is a denying, or setting aside the law of God, as a rule of
 " action or conversation." *Gill's Tracts*. vol. ii. p. 195. 4to.

THE END.

